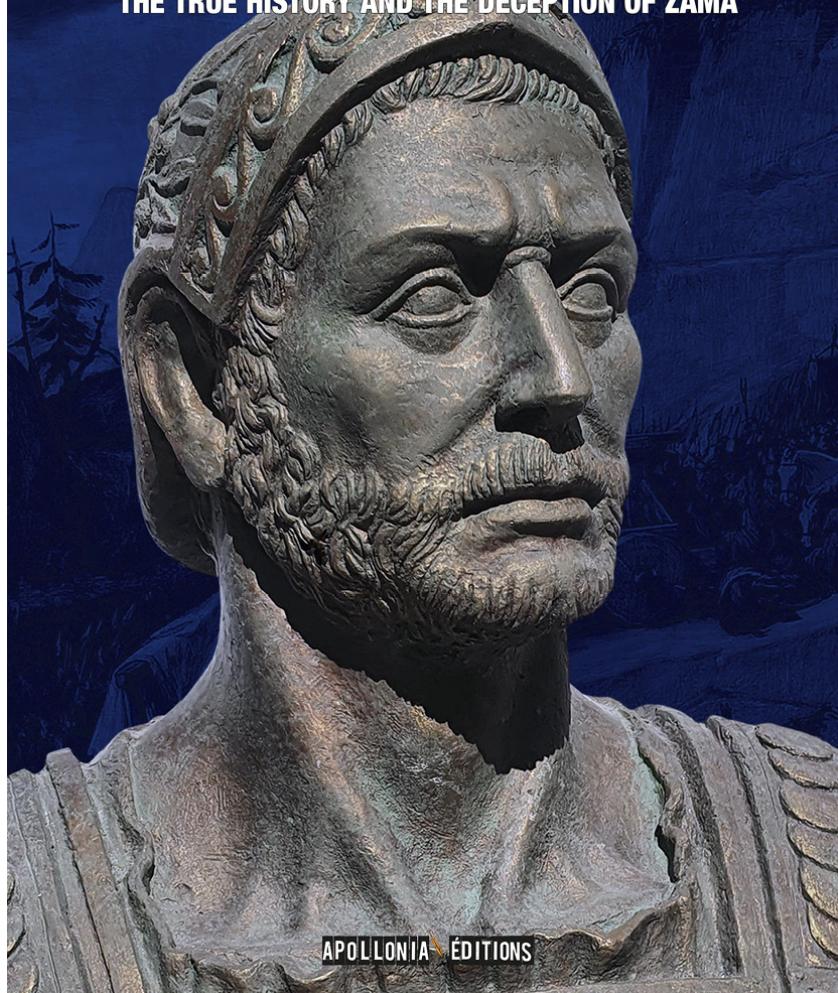


Abdelaziz Belkhodja

HANNIBAL

THE TRUE HISTORY AND THE DECEPTION OF ZAMA



APOLLONIA ÉDITIONS

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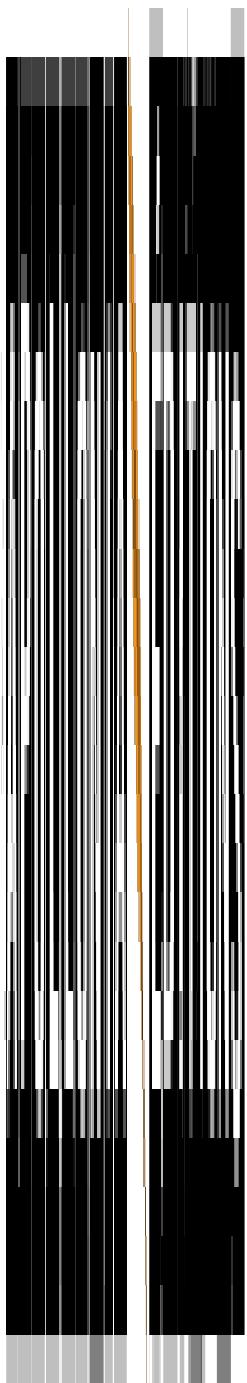
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The true history and the deception of Zama

Translated from French by

Sonya Chaabane



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS :

My special gratitude goes to all members of the Hannibal Club in Tunisia. Also, a poignant recollection filled with devotion and fondness for both the late Ali Salem and Mongi Gueddes.

I would like to thank Khaled Melliti for his precious help, and Professor Yozan D. Mosig from the University of Nebraska, in whom Hannibal encountered one of his greatest torchbearers.

I finally want to pay tribute to all those who managed to overcome the monolithism of direct sources, and thus paved the way for me to rewrite the history of Hannibal.

«...Hannibal (...) who was all but born in the headquarters of his father, that bravest of generals ; reared and brought up in the midst of arms, a soldier whilst still a boy, and when hardly out of his teens in high command. He has passed the prime of his manhood in victory after victory and has filled Spain and Gaul and Italy from the Alps to the southern sea with memorials of mighty deeds.»

Livy

«The one to whom no king could compare, neither for audacity nor for power.»

Plutarch

«It would be a long story to enumerate all his battles. Therefore it will suffice to add this one fact, to show how great a man he was : so long as he was in Italy, no one was a match for him in the field, and after the Battle of Cannae no one encamped face to face with him on open ground.»

Cornelius Nepos

«Next to the life of Alexander, both so full and so empty, here is the most extensive, most serious and most energetic life that ever was : the life of Hannibal.»

Adolphe Thiers

«If one uses the sword, it must be to build a world.»

J. P. Brisson «Hannibal»

"Hannibal was... a giant of world history, whose impact continues over 2200 years after his death. During his lifetime he was a warrior and a peacemaker, a liberator and a statesman, a tactician and a strategist, a builder and a thinker, a land general and a naval admiral, a politician and a diplomat, a polyglot and a polymath, a loyalist and a leader, a man of honor and a visionary, a patriot and a hero."

Yozan D. Mosig

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Translator's Note

*First, I must say that I am delighted to bring Abdelaziz Belkhodja's most recent edition of *Hannibal, the True History and the Deception of Zama* to the attention of an English-speaking readership. This book offers a novel reading of Hannibal's story in light of recent archaeological findings, (specifically the dating of the circular harbor of Carthage) that contradict the narrative of historiographers as to the chronology and even the veracity of reported events. Furthermore, in this English edition (neither the French nor Arabic versions comprise these addenda), Abdelaziz Belkhodja scrutinizes ancient texts and picks up contradictions, inaccuracies, slips of the tongue, downright manipulations and fallacies. He suggests (using textual evidence to support his claim) that history was deliberately falsified by "historians" or rather propagandists, because of its embedment within the political context of Rome's surge towards empire and hegemony, in order to uphold a more glorious version of events. However, spoiler alert, this introduction is only intended to whet your appetite. I must stop before saying too much about the unfolding of the plot. Read the book, you will discover for yourselves this exciting and unprecedented reading of ancient texts.*

Nevertheless, before you start on your journey to Antiquity, I would like to get to my actual purpose in writing this note. I wish to inform readers of a request the author made. Indeed, as Carthage had been demonized for allegedly triggering the Punic Wars (totally untrue), and Hannibal had been endlessly slandered (for centuries) for being the instrument of said aggression on Rome in biased pro-Roman historiography, Belkhodja warned me not to fall into the same trap when alluding to the Romans and notably to Scipio Africanus. He wanted his version of events to be objective and not

downright defamatory. Translation is never a matter of simple word replacement. One of the greatest dilemmas for the translator is to make decisions in choice of words and expressions, as they have enormous impact on how texts are perceived, especially when sensitive issues are at stake and injurious or discriminatory language may be used. I tried to maintain a cautious objectivity, though I must admit that I may have been swayed to use positioned translating in certain instances, as issues developed were highly emotional. I cannot deny that I developed a passion for Hannibal and great admiration for his epopee. As a matter of fact, after translating the fourth chapter, I sent Abdelaziz an email in which I wrote: “I have been infected with Hannibal fever and I am becoming more and more passionate about the subject. I can hardly stop translating to eat and rest...”

Thus, I would like to make an acknowledgement of “mea culpa” if any expression used offends readers’ sensitivities, hoping that they will be indulgent as they take into account the challenge involved when translating Scipio’s controversial actions, of doing so without necessarily denigrating him for them.

For example, Scipio is bluntly termed a “manipulator” but to justify this characterization, the author writes a footnote in which he justifies this assertion in the following way : “Scipio’s many lies, the absence of high-ranking Roman officials at his side, his utter inversions of truth in the face of his compatriots themselves, cannot exclude the hypothesis of downright manipulation on his part.” This is not an exaggeration or a slur upon his character, mere facts are stated here which may be disappointing to his admirers, but this cannot be helped, for pro-Roman textual evidence supports these assertions.

All this to say that both Abdelaziz Belkhodja and myself, as he had recommended that I do, tried not to use objectionable language when speaking of Rome, Scipio and even when alluding to the undeniably contentious writings of Polybius and Livy, and I feel sure that we succeeded overall.

Finally, I also wish to mention in this foreword that I was delighted and honored to be entrusted with the translation of this fascinating and groundbreaking work.

Sonya Chaabane

Author's Note

Reading about Hannibal as he is described by direct sources is a trial. The mission of pro-Roman historiographers was so mightily conditioned by the terrible humiliations the Carthaginian inflicted upon Rome, that their progadanda and hatred make reading them a strenuous task, not only due to general disparagement but especially because common sense itself often falls victim to these blatantly biased writings.

The destruction of Carthage led to the suppression of all contradicting sources, and the advent of Empire generated a revision of history as to the greatness of Rome and its past, thus increasing the misinformation.

The Church, heir to the Empire, defended the latter’s point of view. The Renaissance, based upon a return to Greco-Latin antiquity exacerbated the situation, and European colonialism used this history to legitimate its so-called “civilizing mission” on those

Barbarians, the Moors¹.

However, Hannibal's genius has never ceased firing the imagination and since the Middle Ages, illuminated manuscripts, biographies, fine arts, theatrical plays, novels, documentaries, films, etc., have succeeded one another and increased exponentially². Although Roman historiography censored Hannibal's political objective, merely acknowledging his tactical genius, a number of contemporary researchers have revealed a novel image of the Carthaginian.

Indeed, beyond his military genius, was not Hannibal the advocate of another vision of the world ? An anti-imperialistic, federative vision ? This question may be raised in a world still enduring imperialism under all its forms, as Hannibal's vision is acutely topical.

In the elaboration of this biography, I am in line with Theodor Mommsen, whose intelligence in the vision of events enabled me to better coordinate them. I am also indebted to Jean-Pierre Brisson who so aptly explained the essence of the difference between the two powers, and to Yozan D. Mosig, whose unfailing lucidity allowed me to realize the magnitude of Roman misinformation.

Nevertheless, I have scrutinized this history from a brand-new perspective, for after twenty two centuries of subservience to a fundamentally propagandist version, it was high time to open new paths for research.

In the years that followed Hannibal's death, many biographies³ of him circulated all around the Mediterranean, however any positive aspects regarding his character were gradually suppressed.

Misinformation started after the Battle of Lake Trasimene and culminated in the destruction of Carthage. This deliberate disinformation continued for centuries. To justify the holocaust, Rome demonized Carthage and attempted to defame Hannibal.

1 - Carthage in Hannibal's Century

Hannibal⁴ emerged from the shadows during the Battle on the Tagus, in 220⁵. To this day, nothing is known about his early childhood. Before Carthage was destroyed, Greek, Latin and Carthaginian biographies of Hannibal existed, perhaps even an autobiography, however none of these are extant. It appears as if the passage of time in no way mitigated the terror Hannibal inspired in Romans, which is possibly why not a single favorable testimonial of his achievements survives. All we know of Hannibal's character is what his worst enemies deigned to divulge for posterity : a few rare tributes to his warrior qualities, drowned in a tide of calumny.

In 247-246⁶, at the time of his birth, the eastern Mediterranean was undergoing evolution of great importance : Greek kingdoms were established from the remains of Alexander the Great's conquests. Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor henceforth obeyed the orders of his generals' successors and experienced an influx of Greek settlers. New monarchs promoted Greek culture, whilst safeguarding aspects from old civilizations encountered there. Faithful to Alexander's spirit, they strove to create a kind of fusion among inhabitants, in which the Greek input would merely act as leaven. Thus, a new cultural model was established which gave birth to Greek inspired art, literature, style of life and political conceptions.

Remains found in Carthage by archaeologists provide us with a certainty : Greek was spoken and read in Hannibal's birth town and all wares and goods from the Hellenistic civilization were used or emulated. Without ceasing to be Punic, the Carthage of that epoch was partially Hellenized.

During the same period, the First Punic War profoundly modified the balance of power in the western Mediterranean. At the beginning of the 3rd century BCE, Carthage occupied a dominant position in the area. Carthage's trading posts in Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica and on the Spanish and North-African coasts, solidly bordered sea routes which beyond the Strait of Gibraltar, led directly either to the gold in the Gulf of Guinea, or to the pewter of the British coasts. This economic empire was fundamentally peaceful : Carthage didn't enjoy warfare and aggressions from her enemies often caught her off-guard. The only form of military activity mastered by Carthage was naval combat, and her fleet boasted more than three hundred ships of exceptional maneuvering ability, which constantly roamed the western Mediterranean, to guarantee the safety of Carthage's trading monopoly.

However, Rome who had conquered the greater part of the Italic peninsula since the capture of Tarentum in 272, started to covet Sicily. At the beginning of 264, Roman armies advanced upon the city threatening Carthaginian possessions. Faced with a never-ending conflict, Rome realized that the only way of beating

her enemy, was to equip herself with a powerful fleet.

The war effort was not supported by Carthaginian senators. Nonetheless, in the 17th year of the war, they grudgingly decided to send a new commander-in-chief to Sicily. In spite of the inadequacy of the means supplied, but thanks to his military genius, he would reclaim the initiative in the conflict.

Hamilcar Barca

Hamilcar⁷ Barca newly appointed at the head of Carthaginian forces in Sicily, would play a decisive role in skillfully steering Carthage in the choices she was confronted to. Hamilcar belonged to one of the great families of Punic aristocracy, that struggled against each other to dominate politics. He was well versed in the lessons of the Hellenistic world, he had chosen Greek tutors for his sons, while openly manifesting his attachment to the most traditional Carthaginian cults. Besides, he would reveal himself as a man of action of the first order.

The year in which Hannibal was born, Hamilcar, an influent member of the Reformers' Party, was entrusted with the military command of Carthaginian forces in Sicily. The task was difficult as the military situation was desperate : the Carthaginian army was cornered in the western point of the island, and could no longer manage to stem Roman progression⁸. Nonetheless, Hamilcar resumed control of the army, teaching it new combat techniques and restoring its courage.

In spite of limited means, he set up his principal camps in one of the most strategic locations in Sicily⁹, from which he charted on-land commando operations, and sea raids against the Italian coastline. Gradually, he regained control over the entire western part of the island.

In order to defend herself and to recover the lead, Rome imposed a coercive war loan¹⁰, thanks to which she was able to arm 200 quinqueremes¹¹ and send them to the Sicilian coasts, under the command of Consul Lutatius Catulus. After an initial setback in 242, Catulus attacked a Carthaginian fleet transporting reinforcements and supplies on March 10th, 241. Massed and weightened by their cargoes, the Carthaginian ships stumbled into Catulus' single-line, lightened vessels' trap. Carthage lost 50 ships, 70 others were captured and 10,000 sailors were made prisoners.

Though critical, this setback wasn't catastrophic as Carthage had risen up from far more momentous defeats. Nevertheless, the Conservative Party in power wanted peace. Hamilcar's military feats which had filled Carthaginians with enthusiasm, (leading to their unconditional support for him) may have influenced the Elders into agreeing to a peace. In any case, they maintained that the coffers were empty, the economy in ruins and that Carthage could no longer afford to pursue the conflict. They didn't consider Sicily as a crucial stake in Carthage's future any more, as opposed to the Reformers, who under Hamilcar and his partisans' impetus wanted to hold on to the island, convinced that Carthage's prospective relations with Rome were at play there. The peace advocates won

and Hamilcar received the order to engage in peace talks with Catulus. He acquitted himself of this duty, then resigned to mark his refusal of Carthage's defeatist politics.

With the treaty of 241 Carthage lost Sicily and its surrounding islands. Carthage's entire trade policy was destroyed, and the «Carthaginian Sea» became a sea open to all nations, principally to the winner.

For Carthage, this was merely an additional trial as she had already endured the Massiliots¹², the Etruscans¹³ and the Greeks of Sicily. The empire that was left – Africa, the south of Spain, the gateway to the Atlantic Ocean – was rich enough to ensure her lasting power, but Carthage would now have to come to grips with Roman imperialism.

Rome ratified the peace treaty. Aware that Hamilcar had safeguarded an intact army and that the conquest of Africa was not possible yet, Rome was nonetheless contemplating it and Carthage knew this. In point of fact, the peace of 241 was merely a truce. Carthage had to get ready for the inevitable resumption of hostilities.

The Mercenary War

In Carthage, political life was axed around two opposing movements, the Conservative Party and the Reformers' Party.

With Hanno at its head, the Conservative wing relied on the executive power¹⁴ of the Senate¹⁵ and the Judiciary¹⁶.

The Reform party relied on the people¹⁷ for support, and was notably represented by the officers of the army of Sicily, committed to their chief Hamilcar.

The two rival movements were still accusing one another of responsibility for the defeat, when the mercenaries' crisis erupted.

A few months beforehand, to help the government to progressively pay off mercenaries, the officers of Sicily had repatriated them by contingents. But by indefinitely postponing its financial obligations, the government had provoked resentment, discontent and ultimately riots. Afterwards, the negligence of Conservatives turned the riots into revolution, and their military incompetence led the Republic within an inch of ruin.

On the edge of abyss and certainly unwillingly, the Conservatives then appointed¹⁸ Hamilcar, the hero of Sicily in command of the army.

HAMILCAR AT THE HEAD OF THE ARMY AGAIN

Taking up arms against his old soldiers was a terrible ordeal for Hamilcar, and he first attempted to use diplomacy. However, ignited by their leaders and their success on the military field, the mercenaries ignored his calls for peace. The war generalized and escalated because of Hanno's¹⁹ incompetence, but also through Rome's secret interference in financing and aiding mercenaries.

Nevertheless, often combating on a scale of one against ten, Hamilcar succeeded in restoring the military situation. Thanks to his authority on mutinous soldiers, to his skillful negotiations with Numidian princes and his qualities as an organizer and captain, he managed to appease the terrible revolt and to subdue the mercenaries in 237, probably near Al Monchar²⁰.

ROME DECLARED WAR

Taking advantage of the situation and in spite of the treaties, Rome then declared war on Carthage. Weakened by the conflict from which she had just miraculously risen, Carthage agreed to all of Rome's conditions and forsook Corsica and Sardinia.

HAMILCAR'S REFORM

Still, Hamilcar's victory broadened the Reformers' political base and enabled them to denounce corruption, incompetence, clannishness and the cowardly subservience of Conservatives to Rome. These accusations caused serious political upheavals and induced the Conservative wing to plot to undermine Hamilcar's popular support. They accused him of having caused the Mercenary War, promising soldiers their pay without having been authorized to do so by the Republic. But the Popular Assembly firmly defended Hamilcar, who in turn negotiated with the party in power an institutional reform of exceptional importance.

Hamilcar, General-in-chief

Following negotiations, Conservatives retained their governmental privileges in return for an institutional reform, giving the army the right to appoint its chief. This was how Hamilcar was appointed for an indeterminate period, and in a way that was completely independent from executive power, as supreme commander for the whole of Africa. Only the Popular Assembly could call him back and hold him to account. For his opponents, this exceptional power was contrary to the Constitution. But the validation by the Popular Assembly of their choice of army chief of staff, sanctioned the reform and made the army the exclusive domain of the Reformers. Hamilcar's popularity increased and frustrated the Elders, who had accepted his independence with bad grace, as they had chosen not to alienate the people who wholeheartedly supported their savior.

After the Mercenary War, Hamilcar concentrated on the pacification of Carthaginian territories. Skirmishes with Numidian tribes were still taking place, and he occupied Tebessa, the «town of the hundred gates».

Hamilcar's Project

After having endured politicians' decisions and their obstinacy in wanting to have their say on military matters – with the known consequences – the army

henceforth had at its head an irremovable war professional. But what was this army like ? And what were its means ?

During the Mercenary War, Carthaginian conscripts behaved well, but the objective was then to save their city. Turning them into career soldiers was another matter altogether. Carthage had excellent officers, but the citizens' army comprised only a few cavalry squadrons.

Hamilcar had to levy an army of conscripts and mercenaries from allied cities, but where would he find funds for this ? He could not call to draw upon contributions from citizens, as they were already enduring the consequences of a disastrous economic situation, in the aftermath of a quarter-century of conflicts. He thus had to come up with resources for reestablishing a great army, and reviving Carthage's means to power, through his own initiative.

His idea consisted in conquering new territories to compensate for those²¹ taken by Rome.

To the west of Europe there was a rich and peopled land, the south coast of which had been staked with Phoenician, become Carthaginian trading posts for centuries. Hamilcar intended to use them as bases for creating a powerful state.

THE TREATY OF 241

Peace and friendship under the following conditions :

1. Complete evacuation of Sicily and the islands between Sicily and Italy (Lipari Island, etc.)
2. Indemnity of 3,200 talents to be paid as follows : 1,000 talents immediately and 2,200 talents over 10 years.
3. Return of prisoners without ransom.
4. Return of Roman deserters.
5. Prohibition on making war to Rome and to its allies, especially to Hiero and conversely.
6. Prohibition from levying taxes or conscripting mercenaries or building public constructions on the other party's land.
7. Prohibition from concluding separate alliances with the allies of the other party.

Chronology of the Mercenary War

- In 241, 20,000 mercenaries were brought back to Africa to be paid and demobilized.
- The government of Carthage gathered them all near Sicca.
- Protests escalated into a mass movement.
- Berbers joined protestors and marched on Tunis.
- Carthage sent Gisco to negotiate with mercenary officers.
- The movement was radicalized by two new leaders : Spendius (a former Roman slave) and Mathos (a Libyan).
- The mercenary officers were slaughtered and Gisco and his retinue were imprisoned.
- Carthage executed 3,000 Berber deserters.
- 70,000 rioters besieged Utica and Bizerta.
- Carthage levied a citizen army, enrolled new mercenaries and placed them under Hanno's command. He made attempts to lift the sieges.
- Hanno failed, Hamilcar was appointed at the head of the troops and defeated Spendius, which resulted in the rallying of a Berber chief, Navaras.
- New victory over Spendius, Hamilcar tried to get his former soldiers to rally to him.
- Retaliation of rebel chiefs who slaughtered Gisco et 700 Carthaginian prisoners.

- Hanno sabotaged Hamilcar's strategy, the mercenaries seized Bizerta and Utica.
- Dismissal of Hanno. Siege of Carthage by the insurgents.
- Hamilcar snared Spendius and his men at the «Battle of the Saw».
- Mathos prevented a Carthaginian army from reclaiming Tunis.
- Mathos was defeated near Lamta.
- Bizerta and Utica surrendered and Carthage reinstated its authority.

2 - The Spanish Expedition

When Hamilcar launched the implementation of his plan, he had to conceal his strategic objective. It was generally thought that he was going on a westwards expedition, to pacify certain regions that had rebelled during the Mercenary War. His army roamed along the coast, while the fleet led by his son-in-law Hasdrubal the Fair, navigated on the open sea. When he arrived in Tangiers, Hamilcar put his long-considered plan into motion. The army embarked, crossed the strait and landed in Spain.

The Carthaginian-Iberian State

No detailed records remain in history of the great achievements accomplished in Spain by Hamilcar. We know however that thirty years after his death, Cato the Elder, who had admired the Carthaginian's works *in situ*, exclaimed, in spite of his hatred for the Barcids and his ceaseless calls for the destruction of Carthage : *«No ruler deserves to have his name enshrined in History, next to the name of Hamilcar Barca...»*²². This testimonial from an inveterate enemy, enlightens us as to the magnitude of the development feats realized by the Carthaginian in the peninsula.

We know of Hamilcar's substantial achievements during the last nine years of his life (236-228), right up to the day of his death in the prime of life on the battlefield.

We also know of the distinguished accomplishments performed after his death by Hasdrubal the Fair, his son-in-law and heir to his office, who during eight consecutive years (228-221), expanded on the vast works.

Hamilcar founded a great state developed on the Hellenistic model of fusion of peoples. A state which was further enlarged and consolidated after his death by Hasdrubal the Fair. Thanks to these two men, the most beautiful regions of this great land, the southern and eastern coasts benefited from considerable development. Many towns were established, among which Akra Leuka²³ and Cartagena with its harbor - the only first-rate port of the southern coast-. Agriculture thrived and flourished and the invaluable rich silver mines discovered and exploited near Cartagena, would yield great profits and earnings for centuries.

Nearly all the cities up to the Ebro, recognized the new Carthaginian-Iberian

state, and Hasdrubal the Fair succeeded in rallying all the chiefs of the diverse tribes. The Barcids not only auspiciously devised a huge new market for Carthaginian trade, produce and manufacture, but in addition to this, income from the Iberian provinces apart from procuring necessary funds for the administration of Carthage and its armies, also supplied it with a significant surplus.

Simultaneously, the great Carthaginian army of Spain was expanding through regular levies in all allied territories. Hamilcar's professionalism ensured the devotion of his soldiers to their general, and the lengthy campaigns consolidated that dedication. Furthermore, the fierce and continuous fighting with the valiant Iberians and Celts, alongside the outstanding Numidian cavalry, bestowed the Carthaginian infantry with a remarkable maneuvering capacity and noteworthy sturdiness.

At the Senate in Carthage the Barcids' antagonists had no complaints, as they not only sought no assistance or commitment from Carthage, but regularly sent money to the metropolis. Their supporters sang their praises as thanks to Spain, Carthaginian trade regained all that it had lost when it forfeited Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica.

The Carthaginian army, credited with numerous victories and major gains, became increasingly popular in Carthage, to the extent that at critical times (at the time of Hamilcar's death for instance), Carthage mindful of safeguarding her new territory, sent countless contingents of Africans as reinforcements.

At first, Rome remained indifferent to Carthaginian expansion in Spain, considering that this territory was very distant and that it enabled Carthage to pay its war reparation indemnities. Nevertheless, the quick advances and the magnitude of Carthaginian conquests, finally attracted Rome's attention. In 226, Rome negotiated the Ebro Treaty with Hasdrubal the Fair, calling upon him to refrain from pursuing conquests beyond the river. Rome thus sought to curb Carthage's progress in the Iberian Peninsula, and to ensure for itself a solid fulcrum close to the tribes at the north of the Ebro.

The Roman Senate had no illusions as to the inevitability of a second war with Carthage. Indeed, Rome had the deliberate scheme – the campaign plan of 218 was proof to this – of sending her armies to Spain and to Africa, in order to conclusively put an end to a rival that had recovered all its military and commercial power, in spite of two great conflicts and the loss of Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. Still, Rome was equally preoccupied by an emergency : getting rid of the Gauls in the Po Valley.

3 - Hannibal in Power

Hamilcar's projects were crowned with success. He left a great operational

army, accustomed to winning victories, and Carthage had been enriched by the new and prosperous Punic-Iberian state.

Hasdrubal the Fair, more of a politician than a general, nevertheless a worthy successor to Hamilcar, was also struck down by an assassin's iron at the beginning of the year 221. The officers of the Iberian army then elected Hamilcar's eldest son to succeed him. His election was validated by the People's Chamber in Carthage.

Hannibal was only twenty-six years old, yet his life had been extremely eventful. In truth, the First Punic War, then the Mercenary War had made lasting impressions on his boyhood, even more so as he was the son of the leading figure of the period, and was born in the military headquarters of his father. One may deduce from this that from his childhood dreams, Hannibal was aware that he would be called to an exceptional destiny. Notwithstanding, in spite of the military environment and camp life, Hannibal received the customary education of Carthaginians belonging to the highest classes. He learnt enough Greek – thanks to the lessons of his faithful tutors Sosylus of Lacedaemon and Silenus Calatinus – to be able to write in that language. As an adolescent, nurtured and brought up surrounded by weaponry, he engaged in his first forays under the orders of his father and witnessed his fall at his side during battle. Later, led by his brother-in-law Hasdrubal the Fair, he was in command of the cavalry when he was barely of age. His glowing bravery and military talents soon singled him out among all. It would be his responsibility to pursue the pacification and development endeavors in Spain, begun by his predecessors.

Perhaps he also dreamt of exporting out of Spain, that brilliant idea of merging and amalgamating free peoples from diverse origins, and founding new states under Carthage's federal leadership ?

Many have attempted to defame Hannibal's character, however he has emerged across the centuries with an increasingly glowing aura. If we put aside calumny and the faults that were wrongly imputed to him (as they were those of his allies) there is nothing that one can reproach him with. All chroniclers grant him with having, better than anyone, combined composure and ardour, foresight and action. He was gifted beyond anything else with the spirit of inventiveness. He enjoyed embarking on unforeseen paths, completely and uniquely his own. Prolific in devising stratagems, he studied the habits of the adversary that he was combating, with amazing care. His army of spies – he had some even in the Senate in Rome – kept him aware of all the enemy's projects. He was often seen disguised, wearing fake hair, probing and sounding out his men. His strategic and tactical genius has been recorded in all the pages of History.

He also was a statesman of first order : after securing peace with Rome, he revised the Constitution of Carthage and launched economic reforms. In the east, he wielded huge influence on the politics of oriental empires. He would be an admiral, an architect, an urban planner and a writer... More importantly, his charisma was clinchingly attested to by the abiding, remarkable subordination of his multinational army that even at the worst of times, never ever mutinied.

The Battle on the Tagus

As soon as Hannibal was appointed General of the armies, he wanted to submit the Olcades. He quickly succeeded in taking their capital, Althea. Other towns immediately pledged allegiance to him. Then he launched an expedition to the Vaccae and immediately seized Salmantica²⁴ and later with more difficulties, Arbucale.

On his way back to Cartagena, Hannibal learnt that the most powerful tribe of Spain, the Carpetani, headed a coalition army gathering all neighboring tribes, which was far more numerous than the Carthaginian force itself.

Hannibal avoided a pitched battle and organized a retreat, so as to put the Tagus in between him and his enemies. The valiant Iberians attempted to cross in many different places, but when they landed, Hannibal pitched elephant charges against them on the river banks, followed by cavalry charges. The enemies were crushed by the pachyderms, or killed during their retreat by the Carthaginian cavalry, fighting dexterously in the water against the infantry. Finally, Hannibal himself took to the river, swooped swiftly down on his enemies, leaving more than 40,000 of them dead on the battlefield.

This first of Hannibal's great battles unveiled certain of his qualities as a tactician : his outstanding use of land to cause chaos and throw his adversary off track, then the pitching of all his strike force at the target to annihilate it.

The Siege of Saguntum

Following the Battle on the Tagus, all the tribes south of the Ebro submitted to the Carthaginians, except for the Saguntines, who soon after assaulted the Turboletae, allies of the Carthaginians. From 219, Hannibal besieged their town. Saguntum, though located in the Carthaginian influence zone determined by the Ebro treaty, pleaded for Rome's protection. The latter, at war with the Illyrians, limited itself to a vague warning.

After a siege of seven months, Hannibal finally stormed and overran the city's defenses. Rome then sent a delegation to Carthage presided by Fabius Maximus, demanding nothing less than the surrender of Hannibal and his officers. The Carthaginians had proved their respect for treaties, contrarily to the Romans : indeed, the treaty of 241 had not prevented Rome from seizing Sardinia and Corsica and aggravating the financial clause. In any case, the Roman orator suddenly cut short his diatribe and theatrically declared to the Carthaginians that they had to choose between peace and war. They retorted that he could choose himself, the ambassador opted for war and the challenge was immediately met.

It was the spring of 218 and Hannibal was twenty-nine years old.

Responsibility for triggering war

Roman, but also contemporary historiography (with a favorable to Rome bias), has consistently contended that Hannibal was responsible for triggering the war. Legions of historians have used all possible and imaginable maneuvers – to the

extent of changing the location of the Ebro river – so as to move Saguntum from the Carthaginian zone, and accuse the Barcids for having caused the war. Nevertheless, these manipulations cannot withstand the scrutiny of primary sources. As Yann le Bohec²⁵ wrote : «*The debate can be elucidated thanks to an anecdote that leaves no room for doubt, as it was narrated by a Latin writer :*

«*One day Hannibal told his soldiers of a discussion he had had with an envoy from his enemies :*

- *Don't cross the Ebro, threatened the Roman. Stay away from Saguntum !*
- *But, retorted the Carthaginian, Saguntum is south of the Ebro !*
- *Don't move anywhere, he finally heard himself ordered.»*

4 - War Preparations

After Saguntum, Hannibal returned to Cartagena to take up his winter quarters there (219-218). Following the announcement of war, he devised his attack and defense plans, then he moved to Gades²⁶.

HANNIBAL DEVISED HIS WAR PROPAGANDA

Before perusing the details of his campaign plans, one must wonder about that amazing journey to Gades, which is about 1,000 kilometers away by road. Why did Hannibal undertake such a trip without any military justification, although war had just been declared ?

In reality, this step was of capital importance. Indeed, Hannibal crafted a powerful spin at Melqart's temple²⁷, to the effect that Zeus, in front of the Assembly of the Gods, had ordered Herakles to serve as his guide in the course of his epic battle.

The French etruscologist Dominique Briquel²⁸ enlightened us about this journey through an analysis of the fragments of Silenus' writings²⁹ : Silenus participated to the grand expedition at Hannibal's side, and he reported the facts «*with the utmost care.*»³⁰. He was thus in a good position to present the Carthaginian vision of events. Nine fragments of the Sicilian historian's chronology remain, among which six refer to his *«History of Hannibal»*. Of these six fragments, four directly or indirectly relate to Herakles-Melqart.

This extensive presentation of the hero proves the existence of a close and desired connection between him and Hannibal, and one can clearly detect this in the two fragments which relate to Gades. Hannibal went to the Herakles-Melqart temple because he wanted to seek for his campaign the patronage of Herakles. Like him, he sought to initiate his grand epopee from the famous Pillars of Melqart, in the temple near Gades where the hero had started on his march, from the western limits of the universe. This identification with Herakles was acknowledged by the Carthaginian : *«Hannibal presents himself as an emulator of Hercules»* said of him his adversary before the Battle of the Trebia³¹.

If Hannibal chose Herakles as his model, it was not only for his role of «monster slayer» - the only role recorded by Roman historiography – but especially because of his civilizing deeds. In the 3rd century BCE, Herakles is no longer only seen as the hero who defeated all his opponents ; his triumph is that of culture over wild nature and that of civilization over the barbarity of the people of whom he had crossed the land. He had opened new communication channels and introduced justice and fairness to barbarians by rescuing them from their evil kings.

In actual fact, Hannibal's actions were modelled on those of the hero : he paved new ways, liberated enslaved people, defended democratic forces against the

aristocracy which was subservient to Rome, and, as the future treaty signed with Philip V of Macedonia would prove, his objective was to establish a confederation of states.

ATTACK AND DEFENSE PLANS

Hannibal was entrusted with the military command of the entire Carthaginian territories. His forces comprised about 120,000 men, 16,000 horses, 58 elephants, 50 quinqueremes, without taking into account the elephants and the ships left in Carthage.

Among his troops, henceforth comprising Carthaginian squadrons as well as contingents of allies from Africa and Spain, there was not a single mercenary.

Hannibal only sent meager reinforcements to the Republic of Carthage where he was stationed sufficient forces. He allocated 20,000 men to the defense of the rest of North Africa, the essential part of which remained stationed in the west.³² In Spain, where new levies were easily recruited, he protected his rear by leaving a strong core of infantry (12,000 foot soldiers) and a good number of cavalry (2,500 horses), about half the elephants, as well as the fleet that continued to be deployed on the coast. Hannibal entrusted his brother Hasdrubal³³ with the command of Spain.

With the fleet deployed on the coast and a consistent hard core of forces occupying present-day Morocco, he simultaneously guaranteed the security of the Strait of Gibraltar, as well as his line of supply between Africa and Spain.

In order to be entirely certain of his soldiers' loyalty, he assigned his troops to countries far from their place of origin. Under his own executive command he kept the African forces (Libyans, Carthaginians, Numidians), and sent the Iberians to West Africa and the West Africans to Carthage.

The offensive measures taken were even more extensive. A squadron of 20,000 men had the mission of attacking the western coast of Italy from Carthage. A second squadron – probably with the same number of men – was to target Lilybaeum³⁴. Lost after the First Punic War, this town was to be occupied again.

However, these are only the most modest details of his plan and Hannibal had faith in his generals to successfully implement this part of his strategy. He had decided to carry the war into the heart of Rome's territory, and in consequence he departed for Italy with his grand army.

CHOICE OF THE PO VALLEY

The objective of Hannibal's expedition was both ambitious and strategic. To achieve it, he needed an operations base which was closer than Spain or Africa.

He could not count on the regions occupied by the Italian Confederation, which had stood strong when invaded by the Greek King Pyrrhus and would not disband at the appearance of a Carthaginian general.

Only the Ligurians and the Gauls represented an advantageous opportunity for Hannibal. These tribes that had just lost their independence were alien to the

Italic people. Indeed, they had witnessed the edification in their territories of the first surrounding walls of Roman citadels, and the construction of grand thoroughfares that hemmed them in and threatened their existence. They would welcome the Carthaginians and their army as saviors, the army in which combated their brothers in race, the Celts of Spain.

Hannibal viewed them as a primary backbone for his army, among which he would find new recruits and thanks to which he would be able to secure his supplies.

His spies had already ensured an alliance with the Boians and Insubrians, who had promised guides for his army and supplies on the road. They were to rise up as soon as the Carthaginians set foot on Italian soil.

Events in the east were equally propitious to an invasion from the north. Macedonia that had just consolidated its empire in Greece, was on bad terms with Rome. Consequently, the Po Valley represented the best location in which to gather the armies coming from Spain and Greece, against a common enemy.

For these reasons, circumstances designed the north of Italy as the best point of attack.

LAND OR SEA EXPEDITION ?

Hannibal preferred the land route to the sea route. In point of fact, neither the naval power of the Romans³⁵ nor their alliance with Marseille, could have prevented the landing of a Carthaginian invasion force on the coast of Genoa. The smooth crossing that Mago Barca would undertake in 205 proved this fact. But Hannibal specifically wanted to surprise his adversaries. He believed that it would be wiser to move ahead of the Boians and Insubrians, whose alliance was guaranteed. Furthermore, if he had landed in Genoa he would also have had the mountain to climb over, without the advantage of surprise nor the time for physical recovery.

HANNIBAL'S ARMY

In the spring of 218, Hannibal gathered in Cartagena the most formidable army of all times : 90,000 foot soldiers and 12,000 cavalry, two-thirds of which were Africans and one-third Iberians.

He took along 37 elephants, more to impress his enemies than as a combat force. He knew that they represented a double-edged weapon prone to disrupting his own ranks, which was why he used them circumspectly and in small numbers.

Long preceded by his numerous spies, he brought along in his ranks an impressive superstructure composed of many specialized army corps. Among these, his famous commando units – men who were perfectly trained for special operations, led by his brother Mago Barca. Hannibal also had engineer officers at his disposal and a «communications» division, which granted the general military staff the capacity for immediate reaction on the battlefield, through the use of different techniques³⁶. In addition, Hannibal transported a small steel foundry to

mint coins and to craft weapon parts. He also carried great quantities of gold, silver and pewter. Finally, he was fully informed of the organization of Roman forces by his spies, but also, as Serge Lancel³⁷ mentioned, through the work of Fabius Pictor who had drawn up a staffing table of Roman troops' strength, during the Gallic invasion of 225.

The Roman army

Polybius wrote : «...the total number of Romans and allies able to bear arms was more than seven hundred thousand foot and seventy thousand horse, while Hannibal invaded Italy with an army of less than twenty thousand men.»³⁸ Fabius Pictor, a contemporary of Hannibal's, spoke of a total of 800,000 men. Orosius and Eutropius confirmed these figures taken from population registers by age.

At the time of the declaration of war, according to Livy³⁹, Rome mustered 6 legions that totaled 64,000 foot soldiers and 6,200 cavalry.⁴⁰

Polybius⁴¹ mentioned 4 legions totaling 50,800 foot soldiers et 3,200 cavalry as well as an extraordinary mobilization of 140,000 men and 7,500 cavalry⁴². As to the last reserve regiment, formed of men old enough to be mobilized, they amounted to, in connection with the total figures aforementioned, about 400,000 foot soldiers and 60,000 cavalry⁴³.

The Roman fleet counted 220 quinqueremes, all recently returned from the Adriatic.

ROME'S WAR PLAN

For many long years, Rome had planned that its legions would land in Africa. Later, she had contemplated a combined offensive in Spain, to hold back there the Carthaginian forces likely to surge to Carthage's defense.

Therefore, half the Roman army was reserved for the African expedition, while an army under the command of Publius Cornelius Scipio⁴⁴ had received the order to proceed towards the Ebro, in Spain. However, an uprising erupted in the Po Valley and the consul was mandated to hasten there with his troops. The Spanish expedition was thus delayed and would take place by means of other legions.

Hannibal on the Ebro and in Gaul

In the mean time, Hannibal arrived on the Ebro where he came into collision with the tenacious resistance of Rome's allies. He defeated them and reached the Pyrenees. From there, he sent a number of his soldiers back home, 10,000 men and 1,000 cavalry and he entrusted the same number of men to one of his generals, for the defense of the Ebro. Polybius declared that he crossed the Pyrenees with 50,000 foot soldiers and 9,000 cavalry. There were thus 20,000 men missing from the tally. However, numerous as may have been his losses, they couldn't have reached that figure. Polybius didn't explain this deficit.

Following the coastline in the regions of Narbonne and of Nîmes, Hannibal

advanced rapidly among the Gauls whom his special envoys had warned long ago. At the end of July, he arrived on the Rhône.

Scipio landed in Marseille

On his way towards Spain, the Consul Publius Cornelius Scipio landed in Marseille, where he learned that his expedition to the Ebro no longer made any sense, as the Carthaginian had crossed the Pyrenees. Up until that point, Rome had had no inkling that Hannibal was preparing an expedition to Italy.

The consul aborted his march on Spain and decided to join forces with the Celtic peoples of the region, all submissive to Roman influence through the intermediary of the people of Marseille.

Publius Cornelius Scipio was planning to halt Hannibal on the Rhône, but he was still in Marseille four days' march downstream, when the envoys of the Gauls came running to inform him of the arrival of the Carthaginian on the river banks.

The Crossing of the Rhône

Hannibal was preparing to cross the Rhône with his cavalry and elephants. On the other bank, deployed in a very advantageous position were the hostile Gauls, Rome's allies, forbidding any landing.

By order of the Carthaginian, all boats used for sailing on the Rhône were bought, and others were built by chopping down trees to make rafts. The army would have been able to cross the river in a single day, but for the problem of the Gauls on the other bank.

A strong detachment of cavalry under the command of Hanno-Bomilcar⁴⁵, received the order to move upriver beyond Avignon. Finding an undefended, easier to cross area, they landed on the other bank by means of quickly assembled rafts, and moved south to pounce upon the menacing Gauls' rearguard. Three days later, Hannibal discerned the agreed signal announcing the presence of Hanno-Bomilcar's detachment on the other bank. He immediately gave the order to cross. At the first motion from the Carthaginian flotilla, the Gauls rushed to the bank, but they were attacked from the rear and simultaneously discovered that their camp was on fire. Greatly weakened, unable to resist the attack or fend off and keep at bay the Carthaginians who were crossing the river, they turned tail, fled and disappeared.

Polybius declared that after the crossing of the Rhône, Hannibal's troops counted 38,000 foot soldiers and 8,000 cavalry. Thirteen thousand soldiers are missing from the tally since the Pyrenees. Had Hannibal posted strongholds on his road from Spain to safeguard the lines of communication between his troops and the Iberian base of operations ? Or was Polybius mistaken as to the figures from the start ? We know that the historian from Megalopolis claimed to have found this information engraved on a bronze tablet at Cape Lacinium, on which these details had been recorded by Hannibal himself during his time in Italy.

Polybius chose to trust the inscription on the grounds that he thought it was : «*an absolutely first-rate authority...»*⁴⁶.

Publius Cornelius Scipio's procrastinations

In the mean time, Publius Cornelius Scipio incapable of taking the initiative was still kicking his heels in Marseille. He had prepared a plan for an attack on the Rhône, but the reports he was given were troubling. No matter how many messages he received from the Gauls pleading for an urgent intervention, he did not want to march on Hannibal, refused to believe the news brought to him and contented himself with sending a cavalry detachment to the left bank to reconnoiter. This cavalry detachment stumbled upon the entire Carthaginian army, which had already crossed the river. While fleeing away, the Roman squadron encountered near Avignon a few Carthaginian cavalrymen who were also scouting the area. They engaged in a bitter and bloody fight, the first of this war. The Romans rushed away to report on the situation to the army headquarters. The consul then proceeded on a forced march, but when he arrived, the last Carthaginian army corps had left three days ago, towards the northeast.

The consul could have then turned around with his whole army to join forces with the corps stationed in the Po, to await Hannibal. But he did not, because he was unable to grasp the intent behind the Carthaginian's march to the northeast. He was indeed incapable of conceiving that Hannibal intended to cross the Alps. He finally decided to ship his army to Spain under the command of his brother Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio, while he returned to Pisa with a few thousand men.

5 - Crossing the Alps

After having crossed the Rhône, Hannibal advanced along the banks for four days until he arrived at a confluence, called the Insula. This was a populated, wheat producing region where two brothers quarreling over kingship, camped across from each other with their respective armies. Hannibal helped the eldest to seize power. The winner therefore gratefully supplied the Carthaginian army with victuals and blankets, and helped Hannibal by protecting his rearguard as he crossed the territory of the bellicose Gauls. In ten days the army travelled for 144 kilometers along the confluence⁴⁷, without being troubled.

Meanwhile, the Gauls had taken up strategic positions and were preparing themselves to attack, once Hannibal's indigenous ally had left him to turn back home, and as soon as he reached the first arduous passages. Warned by his spies, Hannibal sent scouts to gauge the military build up of his enemies. He learned that they kept up their positions throughout the day, but abandoned them at night when they returned to their homes. Hannibal then overtly moved his army forward and installed his camp just ahead of the narrow passes. At nightfall, with the help of a lightly equipped commando, he crossed the gorges and occupied the strategic positions deserted by the Gauls.

The next day, finding out that their positions had been taken, the Gauls attacked the long Carthaginian columns simultaneously on many flanks, forcing them to stretch out on narrow, rocky and steep paths. Hannibal suffered many losses of horses and pack animals, who panicked at the slightest scramble, dragging victuals and equipment in their fall. Realizing the danger, Hannibal counterattacked with his commandos from the strategic positions taken up the night before. The fighting escalated the hassle on the column, however, the Carthaginians finally eliminated the enemy. The army was able to proceed with its ascension, painfully and arduously, but without being further disturbed.

Once the narrow passes crossed, Hannibal and his men occupied the village deserted by the Gauls, freeing their prisoners and seizing a multitude of horses and beasts of burden, as well as corn and livestock.

The next day the army took to the road again, in relative security. On the fourth day, mountain dwellers welcomed them with wreathes and boughs as signs of peace.

They declared that they knew the fate of those who attacked the army and to prove their peaceful intentions, they asked Hannibal to choose hostages among them. Hannibal accepted their friendship. They abundantly supplied the army in livestock and offered themselves as guides. Hannibal allowed them to remain, while prudently keeping them at the rearguard of his army, behind his heavy infantry, this corps being the most apt to acting as a shield between the Gauls

and the rest of his troops. His suspicions were soon confirmed when at an opportune moment, the Gauls gathered at the back and attacked. Hannibal's troops valiantly resisted the impact, but other Gauls occupying dominant positions advanced parallelly on their flanks, and tumbled boulders on the column causing a full-fledged bloodbath among his soldiers. Great numbers of them were annihilated, as well as hundreds of horses and beasts of burden. Hannibal launched his commandos and his light infantry to take control of the heights. They spent the whole night exposed there, leaning against a white rock, the strategic position of which allowed them to shield the passing of the rest of the army, with the cavalry and pack animals.

The next day, once the enemy had retreated, the entire army advanced on the highest passes of the Alps. The Gauls' attacks had become sporadic.

On the ninth day Hannibal reached the passes.⁴⁸ He established his camp there, and remained the two days necessary for the arrival of the last elements of the long column of his army (that stretched out at times over dozens of kilometers). Against all odds, numerous horses and beasts of burden that were thought lost, joined the army after having closely followed its tracks.

It was the end of October and by misfortune, winter turned up early and snow started to pile. Exhausted, the troops seemed to lose courage. Hannibal assembled his men, and faced with the magnificent view offered by the vast valley watered by the Po, he exhorted them to be patient, in one of those motivating speeches for which he had a special gift : *"Then Hannibal, who had gone on before the standards, made the army halt on a certain promontory which commanded an extensive prospect, and pointing out Italy to them, and just under the Alps the plains about the Po, he told them that they were now scaling the ramparts not only of Italy, but of Rome itself; the rest of the way would be level or downhill; and after one, or, at the most, two battles, they would have in their hands and in their power the citadel and capital of Italy."*⁴⁹

The next day, the army started on the slow and steep descent path, made invisible by a thick blanket of snow. Enemies had become rare, except for a few brigands lying in ambush. A great number of men and animals slipped and were precipitated into the abyss. The hardened army resisted valiantly, however, it reached a narrow track which was impassable for the beasts of burden and the elephants, because the rock cliff had caved in and collapsed over a distance of 300 meters. The state of affairs was very worrying, and Hannibal decided to circumvent the passage, but snowfall made this attempt impossible. In addition, blizzard had caused a layer of black ice to cover the path, making men slip and bringing animals to a standstill.

Hannibal gave up on the attempt to sidestep the obstacle and after having cleared the snow, established a camp on the mountain ridge. Then, he sent troops together with his engineer corps to clear the track blocked by the crumbled rockslide. At the price of superhuman efforts, in a single day, they shovelled away the boulders and unblocked a passage large enough for horses and beasts of burden to cross. They immediately took them through and Hannibal set up his

camp further down, in an area spared by snow where the animals could graze. The elephants, in bad shape because of cold and hunger, had remained behind and Hannibal sent his Numidians to widen the passage for them. Working in shifts, the Numidians succeeded in widening the passage after three days of hard work, and the elephants were finally able to join the camp.

After three other days of continuous descent, the western Cisalpine Gauls greeted the Carthaginians as friends and saviors.

At the beginning of November, the Carthaginian army reached the Po Valley. Exhausted, the soldiers were billeted in villages where they recovered from their extreme fatigue, after twenty-four days of rest and good care.

Their goal was within grasp, but was so at the cost of great sacrifices. Of the 38,000 foot soldiers and 8,000 cavalry that made up the army beyond the Rhône, 20,000 had disappeared.

By his own admission, Hannibal could no longer align more than 20,000 foot soldiers, among which 12,000 Africans and 8,000 Iberians. Moreover, he had only 6,000 cavalry left.

The march which had started in the spring and was concluded at the end of October, had been carried out without serious accidents or unexpected events, but it had taken its toll on the army depleting and decimating soldiers.

Strategically however, was the military operation successful ? Great losses were incurred, but the element of surprise was totally achieved and there was time for the army to rest, an advantage that it could not have benefited from under other circumstances. Furthermore, the prowess was Herculean. Those who had participated in it felt immortal, no other challenge could possibly daunt them. Before defeating the Roman legions, Hannibal had already won his legend. Henceforth, he needed one single victory for his depleted ranks to be replenished with all the enemies that Rome counted on Italian soil, starting with the Cisalpine Gauls that she had just subjected.

Antiquity has made of the crossing of the Alps the greatest epopee in human history. This grand exploit has been even more glorified than the Carthaginian's brilliant victories. Thereby, Hannibal strode triumphantly right into History.

Insert : from where did Hannibal pass ?

The enterprise caused universal admiration. A number of times and particularly towards the year 400, bands of Gauls had crossed the Alps. But that an entire army, gathering more than 50,000 men, with its cavalry, its stewardship and its elephants, should have been able to climb over the highest and most extensive mountain range in Europe, was an unprecedented exploit. In the narrow gorges and along the steep sides, the army had had to stretch out sometimes beyond sixty kilometers. It had resisted all attacks. The onslaught of rocks and boulders thrown at it by enemies, ambushes of looters and brigands, weather assaults : rockslides, avalanches, slipping on snow and ice and the extreme cold of an early winter. It had resisted against pangs of hunger, discouragement, panicking of men and beasts, and difficulties in forwarding supplies. Considerable losses were suffered. By his own admission, Hannibal lost more than 20,000 men, 3,000 horses, a few elephants and a sizeable number of beasts of burden. Moving forward, in spite of all the pitfalls, had only been achieved thanks to the tenacity of an exceptional chief. Hannibal's crossing of the Alps has always induced great curiosity. Millions of books have been

dedicated to this prowess. Polybius asserted that he followed the same path, sixty years after Hannibal, but the topographical indications he gave are too vague to locate the route. The testimonials he gathered on location were certainly confused, due to the fact that Hasdrubal also crossed the Alps at the head of an army, ten years after his brother.

Nevertheless, an interesting lead on the question of Hannibal's (or Hasdrubal's) itinerary in the Alps was discovered in 2016.

A team of scientists directed by Bill Mahaney of York University in Toronto discovered «mass animal deposition»⁵⁰, in fact huge quantities of dung that a radiocarbon analysis dated to around 200 BCE, but also abundant fragments of Clostridia, a bacteria typically found in horse droppings. What does this prove ? «Even if we cannot with total certainty link this discovery to Hannibal, results consistently prove the passage of a great number of animals and people» away from customary transhumance routes, observed the biologists. This discovery was made near the Col de la Traversette in the Alps, one of the passes retained by orthodoxy as one of those that Hannibal could have taken.

6 - First Battles

Hannibal's appearance in Gallia Cisalpina may be said to have completely toppled the apple cart, spoiling all the carefully laid Roman war plans and utterly bewildering them.

Of the two Roman armies, one had already landed in Spain, where it was grappling with Carthage's armies there and therefore could not return to Italy. The second army, intended for Africa, was still stationed in Sicily. Commanded by Consul Tiberius Sempronius Longus, it was busy fighting the Carthaginians in Sicily, the south of Italy and all the neighboring islands. The consul was still in Lilybaeum with his fleet and his army, when the Senate ordered him to hasten to the Po Valley.

Thus, while Rome's armies were preparing themselves to invade Africa and Spain, Italy, who had triggered the war, was herself invaded.

In the same way as Scipio had been unable to interpret Hannibal's move to the northeast, no one in Rome had dreamed of a crossing of the Alps. Hannibal had capitalized on the element of surprise not only to deceive Rome, but also to allow his soldiers time for rest.

After having allowed his men to recover, Hannibal captured the fortress of Turin after a three-day siege. He then gathered around him all the Ligurian and Celtic tribesmen from the upper valley of the Po, to compensate for his consequential losses during the crossing of the Alps.

Battle of Ticinus

After landing in Pisa, Publius Cornelius Scipio was given the mission of stopping Hannibal and crushing the general Gallic insurgency. He crossed the Po, probably at Placentia⁵¹ and marched on the Carthaginians, going up the left bank.

Concurrently, Hannibal, by then master of the Ticinus, descended the river to

defend the Gauls.

At the end of November, Roman cavalry supported by light infantry reconnoitered the plain between the rivers Ticino and Sesia, in the neighborhood of Vercelli. They collided into Carthaginian heavy cavalry. For Hannibal, this baptism of fire on Italian territory was of capital importance. Upon this battle's fate depended the rallying of all the Gauls.

On both sides, the generals-in-chief commanded in person. The consul's light foot soldiers placed ahead of his cavalry front, scattered and fled at the impact of the Carthaginian heavy cavalry, led by Hannibal himself. While the latter charged the Roman cavalry, Numidian cavalrymen rid of the foot soldiers, swept from the wings round both ends of the line of battle, and attacked them from flank and rear in a planned envelopment. Hannibal's maneuver secured a decisive victory. Roman losses were extensive. Realizing he ought not to have engaged in combat with the river at his back, the consul then decided to cross over to the other bank.

While Hannibal was preparing himself for the final assault, Publius Cornelius Scipio hastened to get what was left of his army over the bridge to the right bank, and destroyed all the bridges behind him. This maneuver cost him the 600 men he had left behind to cover the bridge saboteurs, who were captured by the Carthaginians.

Hannibal, master of the upper course of the river only had to ascend it a little way, to also cross it.

A few days later, he was facing the Romans again.

Battle of Placentia

The Romans were positioned in the plain, with the city behind them and Hannibal facing them. As soon as operations were triggered, the Carthaginian cavalry stormed the Roman position and pursued Publius Cornelius Scipio as he attempted to organize an ordered retreat. Parallelly, the Gauls who had remained loyal to Rome revolted, putting Scipio in a desperate situation and forcing him to make a new move. He fled again, this time towards the hills at the feet of which flowed the Trebia river. He reached them without incurring any serious losses. In this extremely strong position, between the Apennine, the citadel of Placentia and the Trebia River which was greatly swollen at that time of year, the consul no longer feared anything. He would wait for reinforcements as long as it would take for them to arrive. However, he had lost his rich grain storage depot of Clastidium⁵², from which he was cut off by the Carthaginian army. Furthermore, he had also lost all the Gallic cantons that had rebelled, with the exception of the Cenomani, faithful friends of the Romans.

Facing the Roman army camped Hannibal, who was waiting for his junction with the Gauls. In the meantime, the second Roman army had left Lilybaeum and landed at Ariminum⁵³. It had crossed the entire country which ran rife with insurgency without encountering any serious obstacles, then joined the first army

commanded by Publius Cornelius Scipio.

The delicate issue of Roman military strength :

Concerning the strength of Roman legions, numbers put forward by the Elders and corroborated by the Moderns should be subject to caution. Indeed, is it conceivable that Rome only mustered on her own territory (and this up to the Battle of Cannae) forces that were roughly equal in size to those of Hannibal, and systematically inferior in terms of cavalry⁵⁴? This tendency to undercount Roman forces which were present at that time has been persistent. Why would Rome who could, as we have already argued, marshal 700,000 foot soldiers and 70,000 cavalry forces⁵⁵, conserve and spare them when confronted with the greatest peril in her history ?

Need for a new tally :

According to Polybius⁵⁶ the number of troops normally deployed for ordinary mobilization was, by legion, 12,700 foot soldiers and 800 cavalry. At the Trebia, where were gathered four legions, there ought to have been at least 54,000 men. Furthermore, the Elders spoke of «*reinforced legions*» levied in the case of «*exceptional circumstances*»; which was obviously the situation at the time of Hannibal's invasion.

In order to determine the strength of these reinforced legions, we could refer to the tally of Roman forces at the Battle of Lake Trasimene, where for two deployed legions, Polybius⁵⁷ stated that there were 15,000 dead and more than 15,000 prisoners, which adds up to at least 15,000 men per legion. With regards to the cavalry, a precious number has been supplied by Polybius who wrote that the other consul, Servilius, also in command of two legions, sent his colleague a reinforcement of 4,000 cavalry, which could mean that each reinforced legion benefited from 2,000 cavalry.

The figures provided by Appian⁵⁸ are no different ; for Flamininus' two legions he mentioned 30,000 foot soldiers and 3,000 cavalrymen⁵⁹. These figures are also close to those of the two legions that the young Scipio would command in Spain, counting 28,000 foot soldiers and 3,000 cavalry.

Did the Romans deploy normal legions or reinforced legions at the Trebia ? After the disaster at Ticinus, in which Hannibal's cavalry played a decisive role, it seems difficult to believe that the Romans did not deploy reinforced legions. However, with regards to the forces present at the Battle of the Trebia, Livy⁶⁰ set the number at 18,000 Romans and 20,000 Latin infantrymen, then he mentioned the allied Cenomani⁶¹ without accounting for their numbers, apart from stating that there were 4,000 cavalrymen. Polybius⁶² did not mention the Cenomani allies, but subtracted 2,000 Romans from Livy's tally and added «*this being the strength of their complete army for decisive operations, when the consuls chance to be united*»⁶³. But Polybius' count related to four legions, adding up to a total of 40,000 men, which was far less than the forces for four traditional legions, that

he had himself previously reported. On the other hand, Polybius had declared about Longus that he thought : « *that the mere sight of them would decide the issue so much confidence did his superiority in numbers and the success of his cavalry on the previous day give him...»*⁶⁴ Yet, according to the numbers tallied by the same Polybius, this superiority was only of 2,000 infantrymen⁶⁵.

If the Romans had deployed four traditional legions at the Trebia, the total would be 54,000 men and if these were reinforced legions, which is much more plausible, that total would be from around 60,000 to 68,000 men (infantry and cavalry). These last figures would explain Longus' excessive confidence.

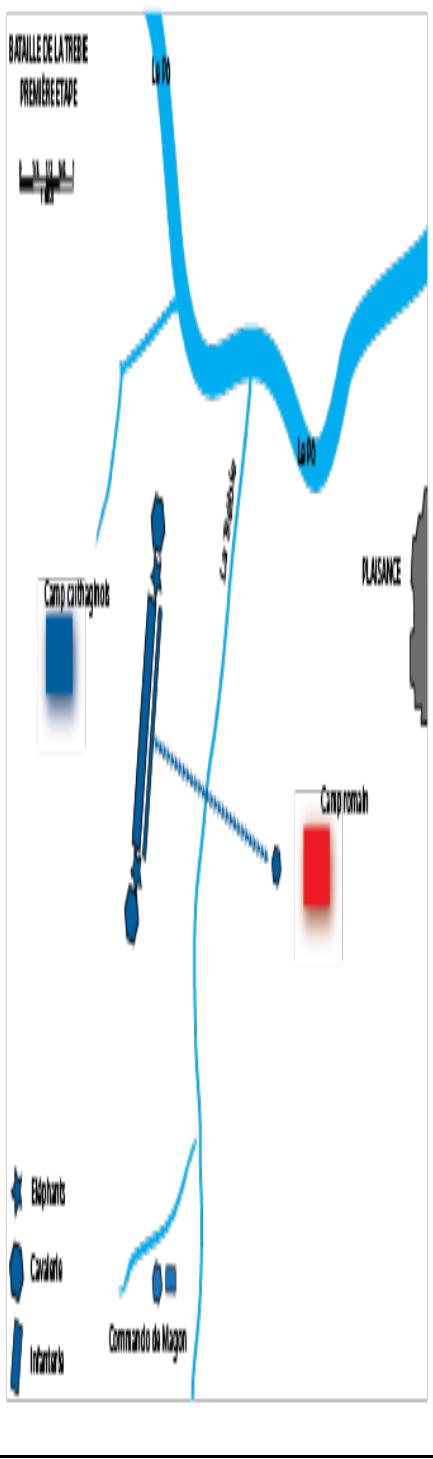
Still, even taking into account this latest tally, it remains incomprehensible that Rome, who could dispose of a mobilizable cavalry of 70,000, should have systematically resorted to a cavalry inferior in numbers to that of Hannibal, for the entire duration of the war. It is far more probable that Roman forces cited after the Battle of Ticinus, were largely underrated to minimize defeats, among which the greatest defeat of them all for the Romans, that of the Battle of Cannae⁶⁶.

Battle of the Trebia

Consul Tiberius Sempronius Longus was entrusted with the command of the army. This man was overconfident and short-sighted, and he wanted to end his consulship with a great feat. Hannibal exploited his impetuosity by exacerbating it : he took all possible steps to trick and mislead him, to make him eager to square it off with him in battle. He even went so far as to simulate a retreat during a cavalry encounter, to give Longus the opportunity of boasting that he won it.

On the night of the 23rd to the 24th of December, Hannibal meticulously orchestrated his military deployment and strategy.

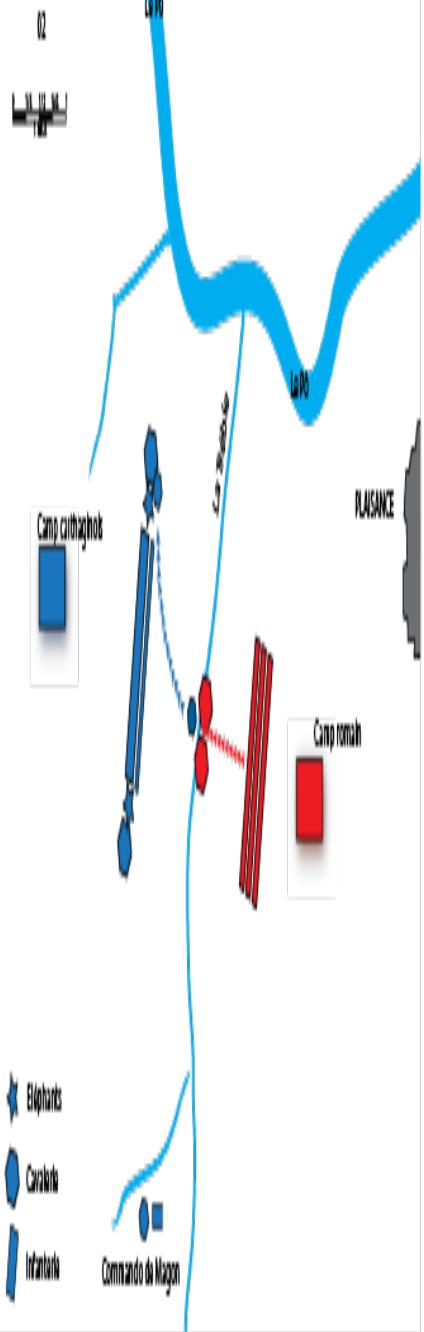
Very early in the morning, he ordered a number of his cavalrymen to eat well and cover their bodies with oil. He recommended that they should also smear their horses with oil, so that they should not suffer when crossing the river, which was extremely cold and prone to flooding in that season.



At first light, he made them cross the Trebia and launched them against the light Roman troops. Awakened with a start and with no preparation whatsoever,

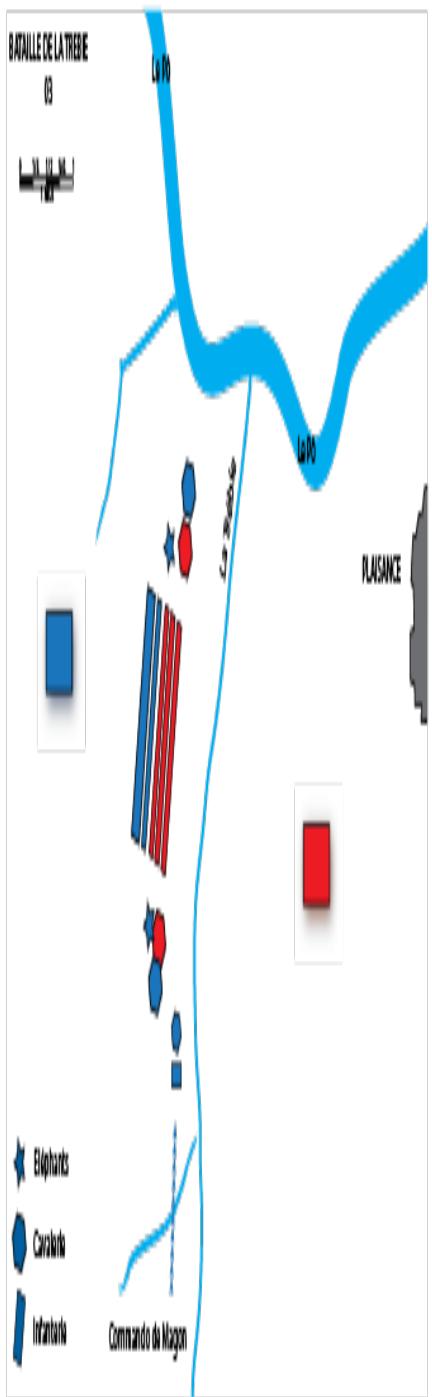
they counterattacked. To lure Tiberius Sempronius Longus with his well-known rashness and overconfidence to fall into Hannibal's trap, Carthaginian cavalry pretended to pull back and fled across the river. The Romans, believing themselves victorious, pursued the enemy in spite of hunger and cold, and in turn crossed the freezing Trebia.

BATAILLE DE LA TREBIE



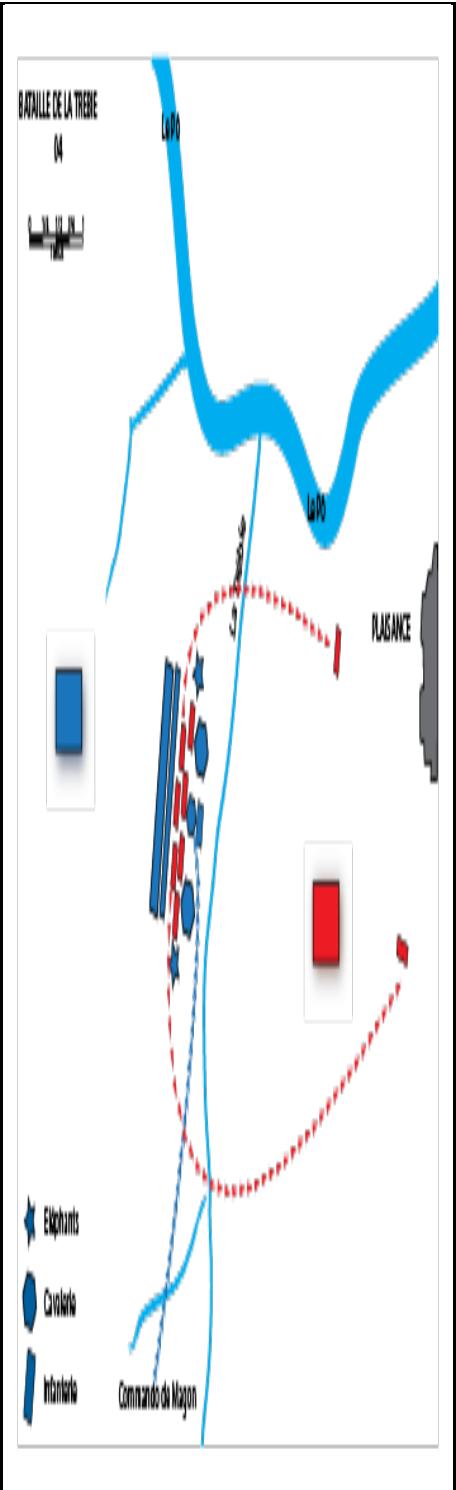
On the field chosen in advance by Hannibal to ambush the Romans, the Carthaginian cavalry joined the rest of the army, wheeled round and repositioned

to face their pursuers. The latter suddenly found themselves confronted to all of Hannibal's forces, lined up in battle order. The bulk of the Roman army then crossed the torrential river to extricate their cavalry. The Romans arrived tired, famished, wet and chilled to the bone. They hastily lined up in order of battle, with the cavalry on the wings as was customary, and the infantry at the center.



Placed ahead of both armies, the light troops started to combat. The Romans, who had already exhausted their sling weapons in the first assault of the early

morning, were crushed.



Constricted at the front by the elephants and outflanked by Hannibal's cavalry,

the Roman cavalry was wiped out. The Roman infantry, by far superior in numbers, resisted for a while against the Carthaginian infantry. However, the defeat of the Roman cavalry, left the field open to Hannibal's light troops and to his cavalry to attack the Roman infantry from the wings.

Hannibal had planned another ruse which would be fateful to the Roman army : an elite commando of two thousand men – half on foot, half on horses - hidden in-between the river and the Romans, suddenly loomed ready for attack and fell upon the enemy's rear. Led by Mago, Hannibal's youngest brother, the commando aggressively ploughed through the bewildered mass of legionaries. The Roman army's wings and last ranks at the center were broken and dispersed. However, the first line, counting about 10,000 men, reformed and threaded a way through the sides to flee. Weakly pursued, this little troop managed to get to Placentia. The rest of the Roman army was destroyed by the elephants and the Carthaginian light infantry, mostly on the banks of the Trebia. Only a few cavalrymen and sections of infantry were able to pass the posted lookouts and reached their camp. The Carthaginians refraining from pursuit, they also converged to Placentia.

The Roman army had never lost as many men⁶⁷. After his legendary crossing of the Alps and his victory at Ticinus, Hannibal had confirmed his genius with this new triumph. Carthaginian losses were estimated by Polybius at 1,500 men and all the elephants died, except for one.

7 - Hannibal, Master of the North of Italy

The day after the new Carthaginian victory, survivors of the Roman legions in the Po, took refuge in Placentia and Cremona. Isolated from Rome, they only endured thanks to supplies sent to them by river. Consul Tiberius Sempronius Longus miraculously escaped capture together with a few cavalrymen and took the road to Rome, where he had been summoned by the Senate.

Hannibal did not want to expose his troops and tire them with long marches in winter, so he immediately settled them in their camp. He knew that serious attacks against the great fortresses of the Valley of the Po were useless, so he contented himself with harassing Placentia's river port and constantly threatening enemy positions. His priority was to rally the Gauls to his fight.

Rome's reaction

Confronted with the danger represented by Hannibal, Rome developed a new strategy that consisted in cutting him off from his rear bases, to eliminate any risk of his being provided with reinforcements from Carthage or Spain. At the same time, appalled by her losses, Rome was reconstituting her decimated legions.

Eleven legions⁶⁸ were put under arms, totaling about 140,000 men and 26,000 cavalry. Thanks to these new forces, Rome sealed the borders, reinforcing all the coastal garrisons in Italy, Sardinia and Sicily. Furthermore, additional troops were sent to Spain.

Consuls Gaius Flaminius and Servilius were sent enough soldiers to reconstitute the four destroyed legions. Their mission was to safeguard the northern border, by blocking access to the two main thoroughfares that led to Rome, from Arretium in the west and Ariminum in the east. Gaius Flaminius occupied the first one, Servilius the second. This is where the garrisons of the Po fortresses joined them by inland waterways. The consuls were waiting for the end of winter to obstruct and fortify the Apennine passes, then they planned to descend towards the river to join the armies at Placentia.

However, Hannibal did not want to remain in the Po Valley.

Hannibal's strategic objective : a lasting peace

For centuries Carthage's policy had consisted in establishing trading posts and weaving a commercial web in «influential areas». However, the emergence of Rome after the First Punic War had made this policy obsolete. The new strategic circumstances had compelled Hamilcar to occupy Spain and to create there a solid state system, which would restore Carthage's power, that had been seriously undermined by the First War and the loss of the three islands.

After the triggering of the Second Punic War, did Hannibal have the intention of pursuing his father's work by exporting the Iberian state system to the Celtic tribes of Gaul, extending it to Italy in order to contain Roman imperialism ? All evidence suggests so.

With such reduced forces, Hannibal could not possibly occupy the Italic Confederation, that had at its command heavy forces and huge military resources. His objective was only to impose peace. Thus, his military strategy was to gradually throw off the shackles of the Italic confederates, and to isolate Rome from her allies. To achieve this, Hannibal benefited from two exceptional assets. The first was his military genius, and his fabulous capacity for confusing the enemy. The second was his political acumen, which prompted him to support the democratic forces of the tribes that he had come to liberate from Roman yoke. He wanted to associate all populations of the western Mediterranean basin and Greece to his plan. Greece, where Philip of Macedon had all the reasons as well as the means, for opening another front against Rome. Hannibal intensified his diplomatic negotiations with Philip to associate him to his plan. As a matter of fact, if only his Greek phalanx were to join the ranks of Carthaginian forces, Hannibal would no longer need reinforcements, and Rome would be forced to concede defeat and abandon her imperialistic pretensions. She would then sign a peace treaty returning Carthage's territories, and would restore their independence to subjected people.

Therefore, the Carthaginian pursued his goal as a great political strategist, on

top of his abilities as an extraordinary tactician.

Hannibal crossed the Apennine

At the end of winter, Hannibal decided to take the battle into the heart of Italy.

Before the departure of the army, he asked for captives to be brought to him. He kept Romans as prisoners, but freed Italic confederates, inviting them to tell their people that Hannibal was their ally, and that he wanted to liberate their cities and their territory.

Hannibal left the Valley of the Po and struggled to find a path across the rugged mountain passes of the Apennine.

Flaminius was still stationed before Arretium with the Etruscan army. He had the intention of moving towards the Valdarno to block the passes of the Apennine near Lucca, as soon as the weather would permit. However, always well informed by his spies, Hannibal outpaced him and crossed the mountains as far west as possible, far from the enemy.

Crossing the Arno marshes' ordeal

When Hannibal arrived in the low and swampy region located between the Serchio and the Arno, it was flooded by snowmelt and spring rains. The army went through another terrible ordeal. During four days, the troops marched with their feet in water, without being able to find a dry place to camp at night; some rested on piles of baggage or on animal carcasses.

To allay any attempts at flight, that would have alerted the Romans and caused them to resolutely await their exit from the marshes, Hannibal alternated units of Iberians and Africans whom he trusted, with Gauls whom he trusted less, to march behind the Carthaginian army. Mago brought up the rear with the cavalry, thus preventing all endeavors at escape. Horses fell by the hundred, illnesses wiped out soldiers and Hannibal himself lost an eye, after having suffered severe ophthalmia.

Nonetheless, regardless of the ordeal, the Carthaginian arrived exactly where he had envisioned and the result, as shall be seen, was a new victory and one of the most resounding of his career.

8 - From Lake Trasimene to Cannae

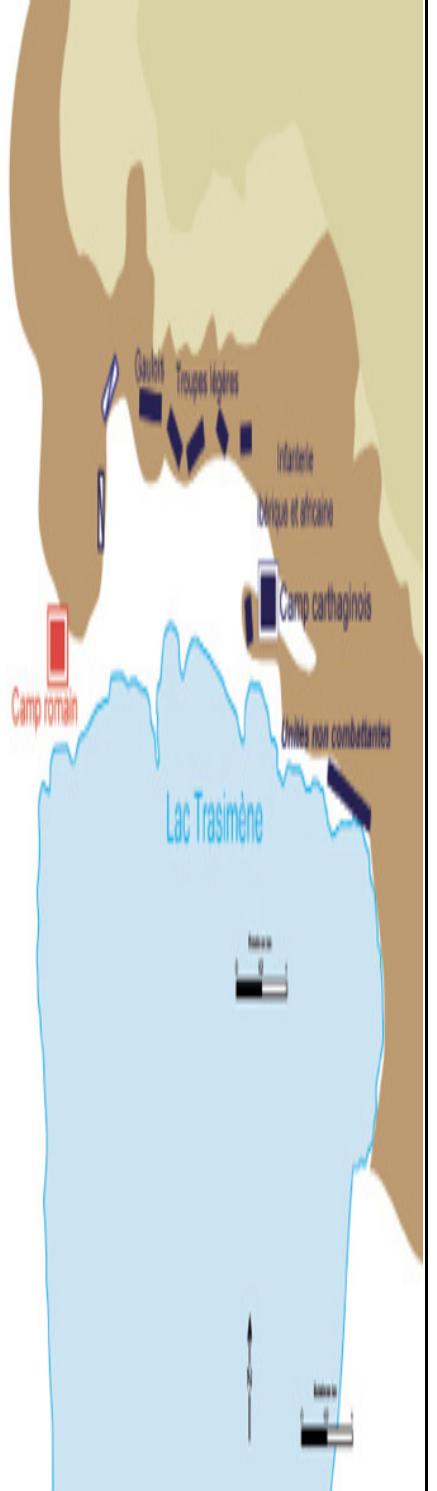
While Flaminius was desperately looking for particulars about the vanished Carthaginian army, Hannibal pulled out of the Arno marshes near Fiesole. With this crossing of the marshes, he had yet again turned catastrophe into advantage by guaranteeing the secrecy of his army's moves, as well as the repose, in total security of his soldiers.

Manipulating Flaminius whom he knew to be very sensitive to public opinion, Hannibal tricked him into following him by occupying the rich region of Chianti. This was an unbearable sight for Flaminius, as he had built his reputation on his agrarian policy. He thus left his encampment and started to pursue Hannibal's army, watching out for the first suitable opportunity to attack.

Informed of all the Roman's moves by his spies, Hannibal chose his battlefield the Borghetto pass, the topography of which he had carefully studied. He set up his ambush along the narrow shore of Lake Trasimene, under the overhanging hills.

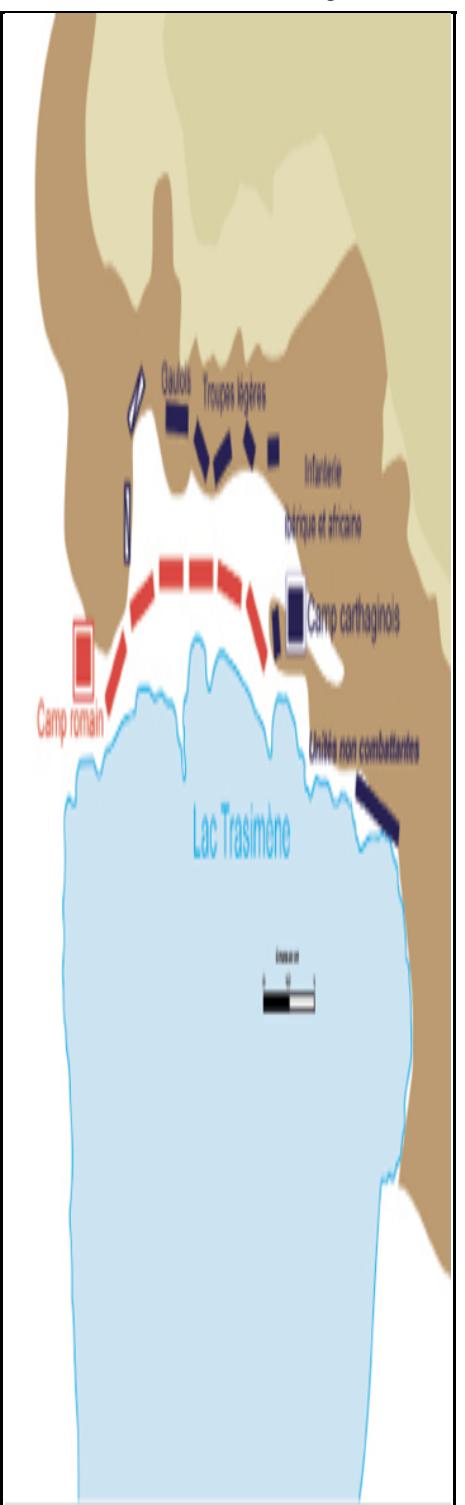
After having seen Hannibal move into the pass, Flaminius set up camp late at night on the lake shore.

In the mean time, on the heights of the hills where darkness and fog made them invisible, Hannibal deployed his troops in four corps, from west to east : the cavalry, then the Gauls, then the Balearic and the Carthaginians ; finally the Iberians and the Africans. He ordered absolute silence and to trick Flaminius, sent non-combatant units brandishing millions of torches and making a racket, far beyond his deployment on the following hill range. Thus, he made him believe that the Carthaginian army was far away and that the Borghetto pass was free from danger.



Early on the morning of the 21st of June 217, omitting to send his scouts to reconnoiter, Flamininus marched into the pass with all his army to follow

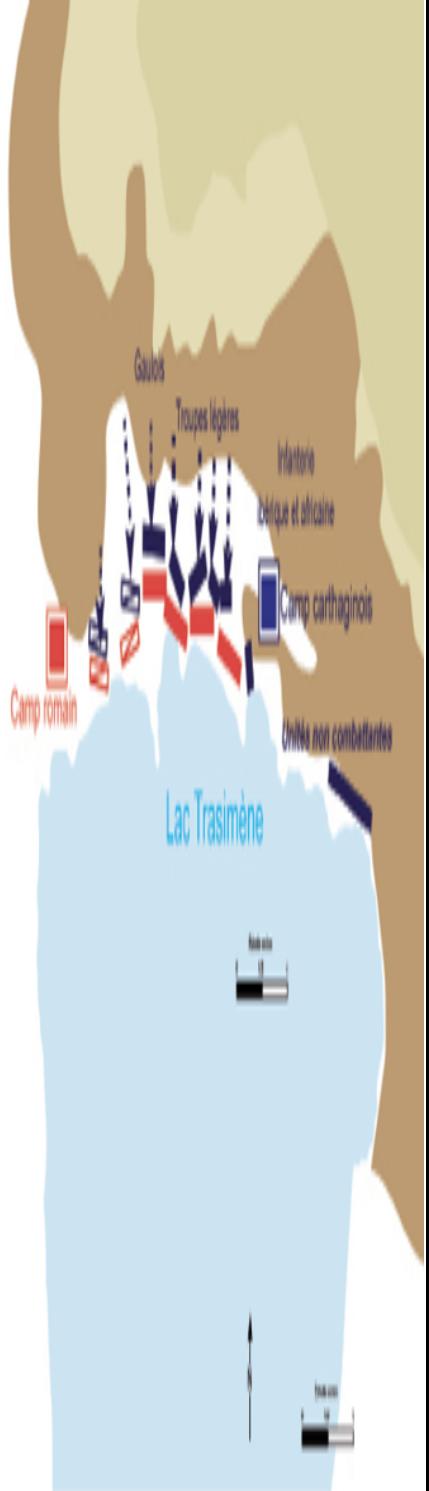
Hannibal, whom he thought he had seen much further away the previous night.



As soon as the entire army was heading down the pass, and at the precise

moment when Flaminius' vanguard arrived in front of the Africans and the Iberians, at the rear of his deployment, Hannibal gave his entire ambushed army the order to attack.

The Romans saw the enemy before they even heard him. Caught totally unawares, the clash was such that a terrible earthquake happening at the same moment was not perceived by the soldiers. The narrowness of the pass and the lack of visibility prevented the Roman officers from deploying the column in battle order.



Within three hours, Flaminius witnessed the annihilation of his entire army. He himself fell under the blows of a Gaul.⁶⁹

Troops of the Roman rearguard who had just had the time to head into the Borghetto defile, were pushed back into the lake by the Carthaginian cavalry, where soldiers drowned weighed down by their armor or were killed in the water by cavalrymen. Of the entire consular army, only a few thousand men from the vanguard who had been able to break through the wall formed by Africans and Iberians, succeeded in escaping the trap. They found refuge in a neighboring area, where Maharbal sent to pursue them with the Iberians, found and imprisoned them.

In the following hours, the cavalry of the Ariminum army about 4,000⁷⁰ men commanded by Centenius, who had been sent by Servilius as reinforcements, was surrounded and destroyed by the Carthaginian cavalry in the Battle of the Marshes of Plestia.

This was another triumph for Hannibal who had, yet again, relied on a new and particularly efficient tactic : the concealment of an entire army and its rapid engagement with an enemy taken by surprise.

After the battle, as was his habit, Hannibal separated prisoners in two groups. Romans remained captive. As for allies, he repeated to them the words spoken to prisoners of the Ticinus and Trebia battles : *«I have not come here to make war on you, but to restore your freedom confiscated by Rome.»*

Hannibal granted funeral honors to his men and to officers of the Roman army, thus manifesting his respect for his adversary, as well the humane principles that guided his actions.

The Carthaginians had only lost a little over a thousand men, Gauls for the most part, known to be lacking in discipline. As for Flaminus' army, it was totally decimated, together with the cavalry of the second consular army.

The whole of Etruria was now in the hands of Hannibal.

Rome terrified and prey to sedition

In Rome terror was widespread. «We have been defeated in a grand battle» announced the Praetor. «Fear raged and panic intensified the turmoil.»⁷¹ In the neighborhood of the Field of Mars a conspiracy was uncovered. Twenty-five of the indicted were crucified.

The whistle-blower received 20,000 bronze coins as reward, which gives us an idea of the atmosphere in Rome at that time. Indeed, preparations were being made for pitched battle and bridges on the Tiber⁷² were destroyed. Quintus Fabius Maximus⁷³ was appointed dictator.

The measures taken after Trasimene showed how deeply dismayed the Romans were. They implemented a huge «religious mobilization» and Rome called upon all her gods for divine help, as well as those of Carthage.

To stave off Hannibal's success, which was largely relayed by Greek and Carthaginian chroniclers, Rome, aware of being in danger of decline, launched a counter propaganda campaign led by Fabius Pictor and Cincius Alimentus, who

wrote in Greek. They would thus become Rome's first historians.

Due to losses in men, the duration of service was lengthened and the minimum income level needed for subsistence of recruits (cens), was revised downwards.

Fabius Maximus strengthened the city walls and repaired them. He directed the defense himself, at the head of the reserve army. Rome increased its forces to bring them to seventeen legions⁷⁴. As for the fleet, a useful backup in case of siege, it was hastily armed.

Hannibal on the eastern coast

However, Hannibal neither marched on Rome, nor against Servilius. Making a totally unexpected progression, he left Spoletium to the side, crossed Umbria, then Picenum and only halted on the shores of the Adriatic. His men and his horses were still not sufficiently rested from the ills of the spring campaign (the crossing of the Arno and the battles), therefore he allowed them to take a break in this beautiful region, for the duration of the summer.

Parallelly, the Carthaginian army reestablished long disrupted communications with Carthage and sent word by sea route of the victories. Carthage rejoiced, but the government of the Conservatives did nothing to help Hannibal. The total independence that had been given to the Carthaginian army, since the reform undertaken by Hamilcar, comforted the metropolis' financiers in their stance. They refused to send reinforcements, in spite of the strong appeals of the young Barca. Furthermore, some of the oligarchs viewed his triumph with a jaundiced eye. They indeed remembered the reformist political positions of his father, and feared that the son should return with the same political views, sustained by the formidable legitimacy earned him by his victory over Rome.

Restructuring of the Carthaginian army

While on the Adriatic, Hannibal reorganized and rearmed his heavy infantry, equipping it with weapons belonging to Romans who had fallen at Trasimene. A question may be asked here : why did Hannibal decide to restructure his army and to change his heavy infantry's method of combat in the midst of his triumphant success, even though his military tactics suffered no fault ? Why did he want to change «a winning team» ?

If one ponders on the reason why Hannibal equipped his heavy infantry with Roman weapons and dress, a clue draws attention. Admittedly, the equipment of a heavy infantryman was essentially constituted of a shield, helmet, sword, chain-mail and sandals. So what would make a North African soldier different from a Roman one apart from equipment ? Nothing, except for skin color or facial features perhaps, which are rather difficult to distinguish anyway from behind a helmet and shield, and in the middle of battle. Furthermore, at Cannae, Hannibal would put the Romans in a position where they were facing a dust-laden wind that blinded them.

In light of these developments, we may hypothesize the following : after having countless times displayed his extraordinary tactical genius, was Hannibal preparing the ultimate bombshell by disguising his own heavy infantryman as Roman legionaries, in order to better deceive the enemy ? It is hard to believe that a man of whom the Elders spoke of the propensity for resorting to the art of disguise, (to mingle with his soldiers without being recognized) should not have thought of this to trick the Romans. Moreover, the strategic posture and the magnitude of the victory at Cannae, in no way exclude this hypothesis. Livy pointed out that it was difficult to distinguish between African heavy infantry and its Roman counterpart at Cannae, in view of the equipment⁷⁵.

In the mean time, Rome was paralyzed by terror, expecting an imminent attack any day and this pause in hostilities allowed Hannibal a respite of at least four weeks, during which he hastened to restructure his army. Despite his precarious situation at the heart of a hostile country, with an army far inferior in numbers to that of his adversaries, Hannibal proceeded with changing his entire combat organization. Finally, when his army had familiarized itself with the new weapons, he broke camp and riding along the coastline moved southwards.

As previously seen, the military dimension alone was insufficient to disband the Italic Confederation. Hannibal had to break at its core, its military center, that is to say the sabellian cities remaining faithful to Rome, but that came after the Latin cities in the statutory hierarchy. Hannibal attempted to get closer to them, but Rome evacuated the exposed localities and above all, strictly applied a scorched earth policy, wherever the Carthaginian was likely to pass.

Fabius Maximus «the Delayer»

Fabius Maximus nicknamed Cunctator⁷⁶ acted differently from his predecessors. He was in his sixties, he was thoughtful and firm, to the extent that he was faulted for his slowness and his obstinacy. He venerated the good old times, was a zealous servant of the all-powerful Senate and obeyed the authority of the civil government. After prayers and sacrifices to the gods, he followed the most prudent and methodical strategy. A political adversary of Flamininus, he was appointed dictator in reaction to the excesses of military demagogry, and he was determined to avoid pitched battle. Fabius was firmly convinced that the most elementary rule of the art of war would prevent Hannibal from moving forward, as long as he believed himself to be closely monitored by an intact Roman army. He himself took responsibility for this mission, and joined the two newly formed legions to the army of Ariminum. He hoped that daily struggles for forage would weaken Hannibal's army and ultimately starve it.

March on Capua and return to Apulia

As his spies warned him about everything that was being plotted by the enemy, Hannibal quickly learned about the measures that had been decided. Taking into account the delaying tactics which were part of the general's temperament,

Hannibal lingered too, passing right in front of the legions, crossing the Apennine again and marching down to the heart of Italy, not far from Beneventum. He captured the open city Telesia on the border of Latium and Campania, then marched on to Capua. This dependent Italic city was the most important of all cities and had been oppressed and deprived of its local charters. Hannibal had secretly colluded with Campanians of the Roman Federation and was planning to make them defect from it. However, this project was thwarted to start with.

Keeping to the high ground, Fabius' army followed Hannibal step by step and passively witnessed the moves of the conquering army. However, when the Carthaginian set off again towards the east, Fabius hampered his advance at Casilinum⁷⁷ and occupied the town with a great show of force, on the left bank of the river Voltumnus. On the right bank, he crowned all heights with his army and positioned a division on the road, ahead of the river. At nightfall, to extricate his army from possible encirclement, Hannibal sent his commandos on a mission. They took 2,000 oxen and tied torches to their horns, then lit the torches and made the bullocks swiftly climb up the crest of a mountain, distant from their base. The Romans in charge of closing the passages, were tricked into believing that the Carthaginians were trying to make their way through the mountain. They abandoned their positions and rushed towards the mountaintop. As soon as they reached the crest, the Carthaginians shoved the bullocks towards them. These poor beasts, already terrified by the flames burning over their heads, panicked and fled downhill, dragging the Romans every which way. Meanwhile, Hannibal calmly moved forward towards the passes, found the passage free and crossed it without hindrance. He then sent a corps of his Iberians to evacuate his commandos. Fabius Maximus was ridiculed and scorned by all.

After having travelled over the whole of central Italy⁷⁸ without hindrance or opposition, Hannibal returned near Lucera with plunder and spoils.

It was harvest season and Hannibal chose the great plains of Apulia⁷⁹ rich in wheat and grassland, to collect the provisions necessary for his army during winter. He set up an entrenched camp in Geronium, to the north of Lucera. Every day, two-thirds of his army was employed in foraging operations, while the other third supported the detachments scattered in the countryside under his orders.

Fabius Maximus and Minucius

This was the time that Marcus Minucius Rufus, Commander-in-chief of the Roman cavalry in the absence of Fabius, thought opportune for attack. He moved closer to the Carthaginians and set up camp in the plain of Larinum⁸⁰. Then he started to conduct skirmishes against the Punic squadrons, harassing foragers busy collecting supplies. He appeared to have compelled Hannibal to retreat and concentrate all his forces at Geronium, but in reality Hannibal viewed Minucius as a new Flaminus and was only simulating a retreat, while allowing rumors of Minucius' victory to spread. As a result, a storm of protests rose against Fabius the «Delayer» in Rome. How could he allow Hannibal to devastate central Italy, replenishing his supplies in full view of Roman armies far more numerous than

his own ? Italic cities criticized the absence of Roman protection, daily noticing the superiority of Carthaginians. As for the Roman army, it was infuriated by the inglorious role its own commander had condemned it to play, and nicknamed Fabius Hannibal's «paedagogus», the name given to the slave who followed Roman children to school carrying their books.

Hannibal tricking the Romans

The culmination of the Roman plight occurred when Hannibal resorted to a new trick. Crossing a rich agricultural region, the Carthaginian learned that Fabius owned lands there. He then ravaged and burned all the region, sparing Fabius' lands to cast doubts about his commitment to combating him. Reactions from the People's Assembly were not long in coming. The worst accusations were made against Fabius and blinded by their suspicions, the Romans even spoke of collusion between him and the Carthaginian. His political adversaries, chief among whom the previous Praetor Varro, capitalized on heightened passions. Besides, Fabius had been appointed dictator by the Senate, and dictatorship was considered as a privilege of the Conservative Party. Joining their voices to those of humiliated soldiers, as well as to those of owners of pillaged and looted lands, the disgruntled imposed a motion compelling Fabius to share his powers with his subordinate Minucius. Dictatorship which had been created to prevent division in command in times of peril, lost all meaning and sense as the commandment of the Roman army was again split in two.

Fabius persisted with his methodical inaction, but Minucius, required to justify his new dictatorial title sword in hand, precipitously attacked the Carthaginian army. He narrowly escaped slaughter, thanks to the opportune arrival of Fabius with fresh troops. To a certain extent, this incident proved the wisdom of Fabius' delaying tactics. However, Hannibal had obtained what he wanted, and neither Fabius' cautiousness nor Minucius' aggressive boldness prevented him from calmly continuing to gather his provisions. Henceforth, he could securely spend winter in his quarters in Geronium, with full supplies and undisturbed by foes.

9 - The Battle of Cannae

Although Minucius' failed last attempt somewhat justified Fabius' delaying tactics, the Senate firmly decided to put a stop to the war of attrition that was exhausting Rome more than Hannibal. Consequently, they decided to deploy against the Carthaginians the greatest army ever mobilized : eight reinforced legions. Who could doubt that with such forces, Rome would not promptly crush an adversary three times less numerous ? In addition, two reinforced legions were sent to Cisalpine Gaul, under the command of the consular Praetor⁸¹ Lucius Postumius⁸². This diversion would be the cause for the homecoming of Hannibal's Gallic auxiliaries.

Did a Roman general capable of commanding an army of eight legions even exist ?

Old Fabius' obstinate lingering, as well as ceaseless internal squabbling had made the Senate unpopular, and continued support for the dictatorship impossible. Appointing a new dictator was also almost unachievable. Rumor had it that the senators protracted the war⁸³ in an attempt to influence the election of consuls, which fact amplified the people's suspicions. A new consul was however finally appointed, Aemilius Paullus, who had been commander in Illyria in 219 BCE. A huge majority appointed Terentius Varro to share his command.

The arrival of spring allowed Hannibal to leave his encampment. Implementing a fully matured plan, he launched an offensive. Moving from Geronium towards the south, he passed before Lucera, crossed the Aufidus⁸⁴ and captured the fortress at Cannae⁸⁵, where were stored the Romans' main wheat reserves. This stunning blow forced the Romans to speed up their war preparations. These hasty arrangements were exactly what Hannibal had anticipated, as he judiciously chose his battle site and devised his plan, which was unquestionably the most brilliant in the entire military history of the world.

Aemilius Paullus and Terentius Varro arrived in Apulia at the beginning of the summer of 216. The Senate had given them the official order to fight. They commanded four legions each.

Their junction made the army eight legions strong : at least 100,000 foot soldiers and far more cavalry than counted the Carthaginian army⁸⁶. Hannibal disposed of 10,000 cavalry and his infantry did not exceed 40,000 men.

Roman army deployment

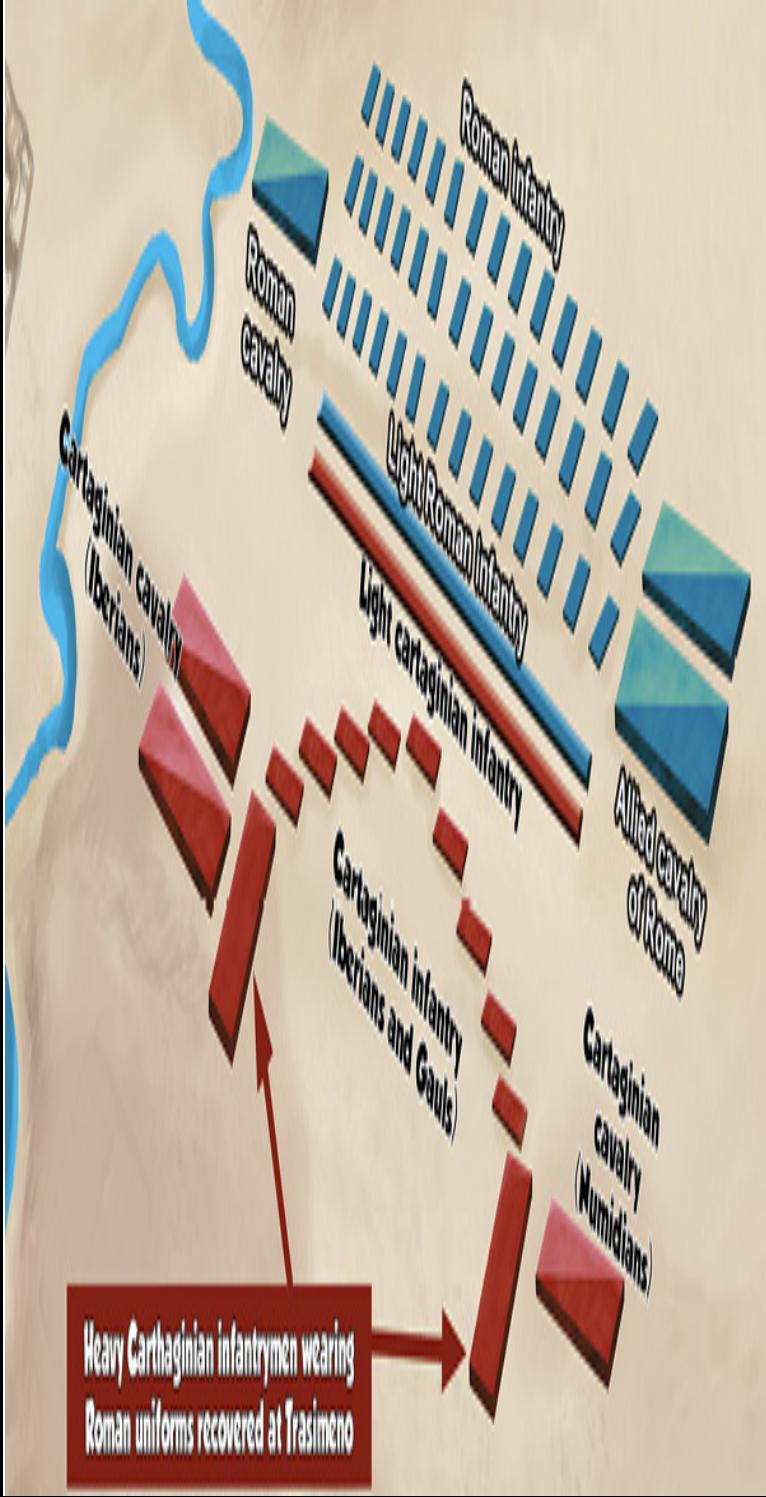
On the 2nd of August the bulk of the army took position near a small camp on the left bank of the Aufidus⁸⁷, very close to the Carthaginians. The Roman lines were ranked in orderly rows on the vast plain located to the west of Cannae. Hannibal's army crossed the Aufidus and followed the legions. The Romans had placed their cavalry on their flanks. With their right wing resting on the Aufidus were the Equites, the division of knights in which combated the majority of senior officers led by Aemilius Paullus. Which fact casts a doubt about the commandment of the army that day not having been his prerogative, as the consul commanding the Equites, a hereditary aristocratic caste, was also traditionally in charge of the battle⁸⁸.

This evidence indicates that Aemilius Paullus was in command of the army on that portentous day, and not Varro. In support of this argument and to further substantiate this claim, we have also scrutinized Polybius' own slip of the tongue by which he contradicted his own assertion that Varro, not Aemilius commanded the Cannae battle. Indeed, he had Hannibal proclaim to his troops, speaking about Roman commanders of great battles they had vanquished : «keep before your eyes the battle of the Trebia fought against the father of the present Roman general, bear in mind the battle of the Trasimene against Flaminius, and that of

At the other extremity of the Roman lines on the side of the plain, was Varro at the head of the allied cavalry. The heavy infantry under the orders of Proconsul Servilius, was massed at the center of the plain.⁹⁰

Carthaginian army deployment

Hannibal placed his light infantry face-to-face with the Roman infantry, his lines adopting a crescent shape, in the center of which were positioned his Gallic and Iberian troops. At the crescent's wings, halved into two equal blocks placed in echelon formation, were his Libyan heavy infantrymen, wearing Roman equipment (collected from the battlefield at Trasimene, shields, helmets and chain-mail.) Along the river, on the left flank of the Carthaginian army, facing the Roman cavalry, was massed the heavy cavalry under Hasdrubal's orders. At the other extremity, were positioned the Numidian cavalrymen. Hannibal commanded the center, from where his tactic of organized retreat would be triggered.



1/Disposition of the armies

Hannibal's plan

If Hannibal's plan at Cannae is the most famous of the entire military history of the world, it is because of its tactical perfection, its meticulous preparation (which he initiated on the day after the Battle of Trasimene) and its exceptional clarity. The whole plan hinged on one phase : attracting Romans towards the center of the deployment then surrounding them, constricting their movements and eliminating them, thereby crushing their numerical superiority. This encirclement tactic had the virtue of suppressing from combat the mass of soldiers forming the center, as only soldiers on the outskirts could battle with the enemy.

THE CRESCENT

The convex shape of the crescent⁹¹ would be aimed at subjecting Roman troops to an inertial convergence towards the center, where would be gathered the closest Carthaginian troops.

STRATEGIC WITHDRAWAL

This convergence would be increased by a Carthaginian strategic withdrawal at the center of the crescent. The Roman army would mistake this withdrawal for a mad rush to retreat and would accelerate its momentum by advancing to pursue them.

REPOSITIONING OF LIBYANS

The halt of the Carthaginian strategic withdrawal would reveal to the Romans the presence, on their flanks, of Libyans wearing Roman armors and weapons⁹².

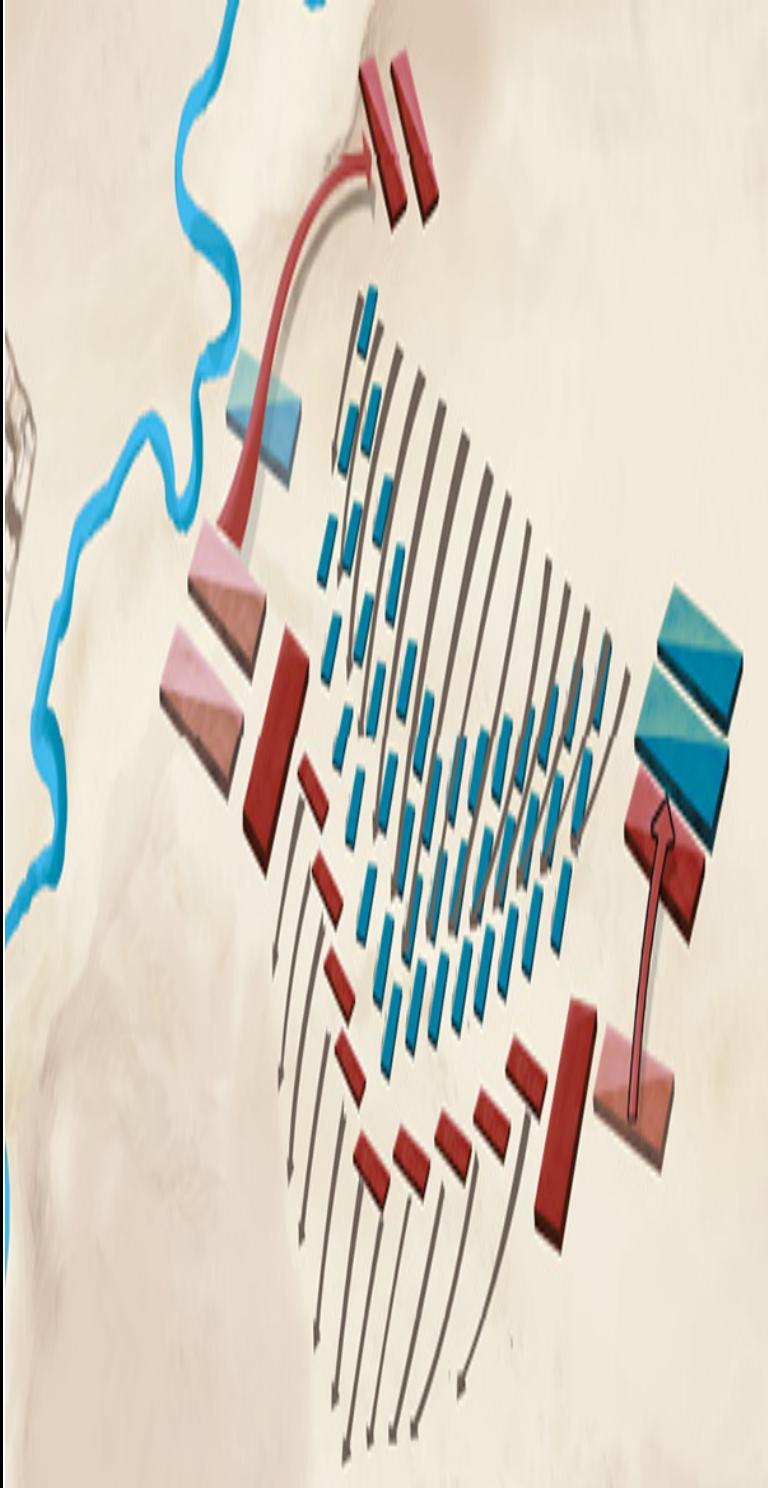
ENCIRCLEMENT

The crescent would stop its organized retreat and reverse its movement. The Carthaginian cavalry would attack at the rear of the Roman troops, preventing them from any attempt to retreat. Pressed on all sides, the Roman army would no longer have any room to maneuver.

OBLITERATION OF THE CENTER

The result would be that only soldiers on the periphery of the Roman block would be able to fight, while the overwhelming majority of troops would not be able to make any contact with the enemy.

Unfolding of the battle



2/ Start of operations

VANGUARD COMBAT

After a short vanguard engagement between light infantry troops, that Hannibal had stretched out to the utmost to avoid envelopment, the battle was initiated all along the line.

INFANTRY COMBAT

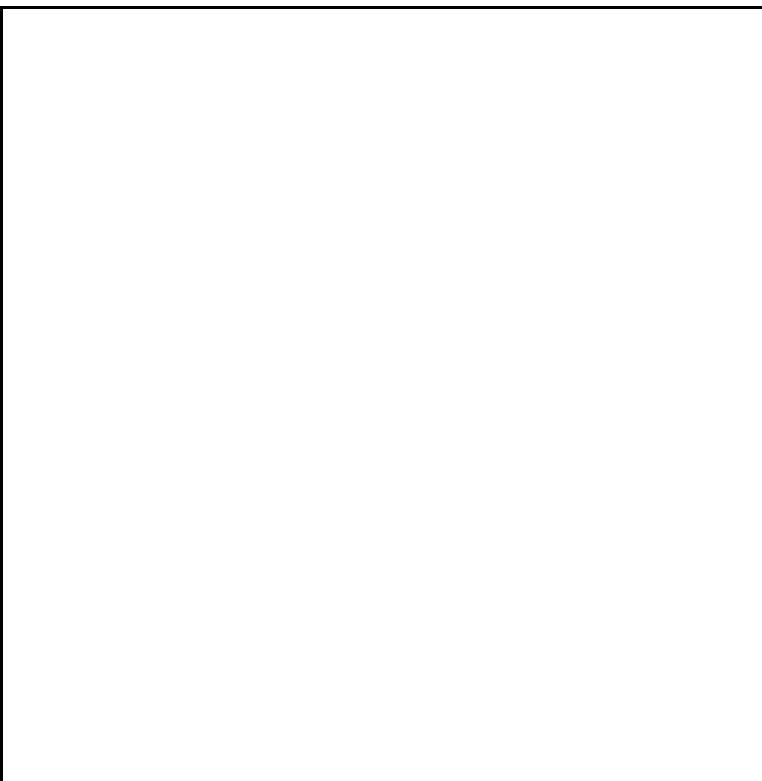
At the center, the infantry combat was unfolding according to Hannibal's plan : the Roman legions converged towards the center of the crescent, putting increasing pressure on their Gallic and Iberian enemies, gaining upon them with apparent success. In reality, Hannibal⁹³ had triggered this progressive retreat, to reverse the direction of the crescent. The Roman foot soldiers carried away by their momentum, fell into the trap while believing they were winning. The crescent recoiled until it had reached the limit of its «depth», which was the rear of the two corps of Libyan foot soldiers, disguised as Romans.

CAVALRY COMBAT : The strategic imbalance

Hannibal placed a greater number of cavalrymen to the left of his army, in order to swiftly eliminate the elite Roman cavalry⁹⁴ which was smaller than the allied cavalry.

The Roman cavalry soon lay decimated by Hasdrubal's cavalry, on the banks of the Aufidus. Wounded, the commander-in-chief of the Roman army, Consul Aemilius Paullus joined his foot soldiers whom he thought victorious, engulfing himself with them into Hannibal's trap.

ENGAGEMENT IN BATTLE OF HANNIBAL'S DISGUISED INFANTRYMEN





3/ Destruction of Roman allied cavalry, intervention of heavy infantrymen.

The heavy Carthaginian infantrymen wearing Roman armor and weapons,

positioned on both sides of the Roman foot soldiers who were engulfing themselves into the trap, made a quarter turn towards the center and attacked. The Romans bewildered by these soldiers dressed as them, yet assaulting them on the flanks, attempted in total disarray to halt the pace of their rout and reposition.

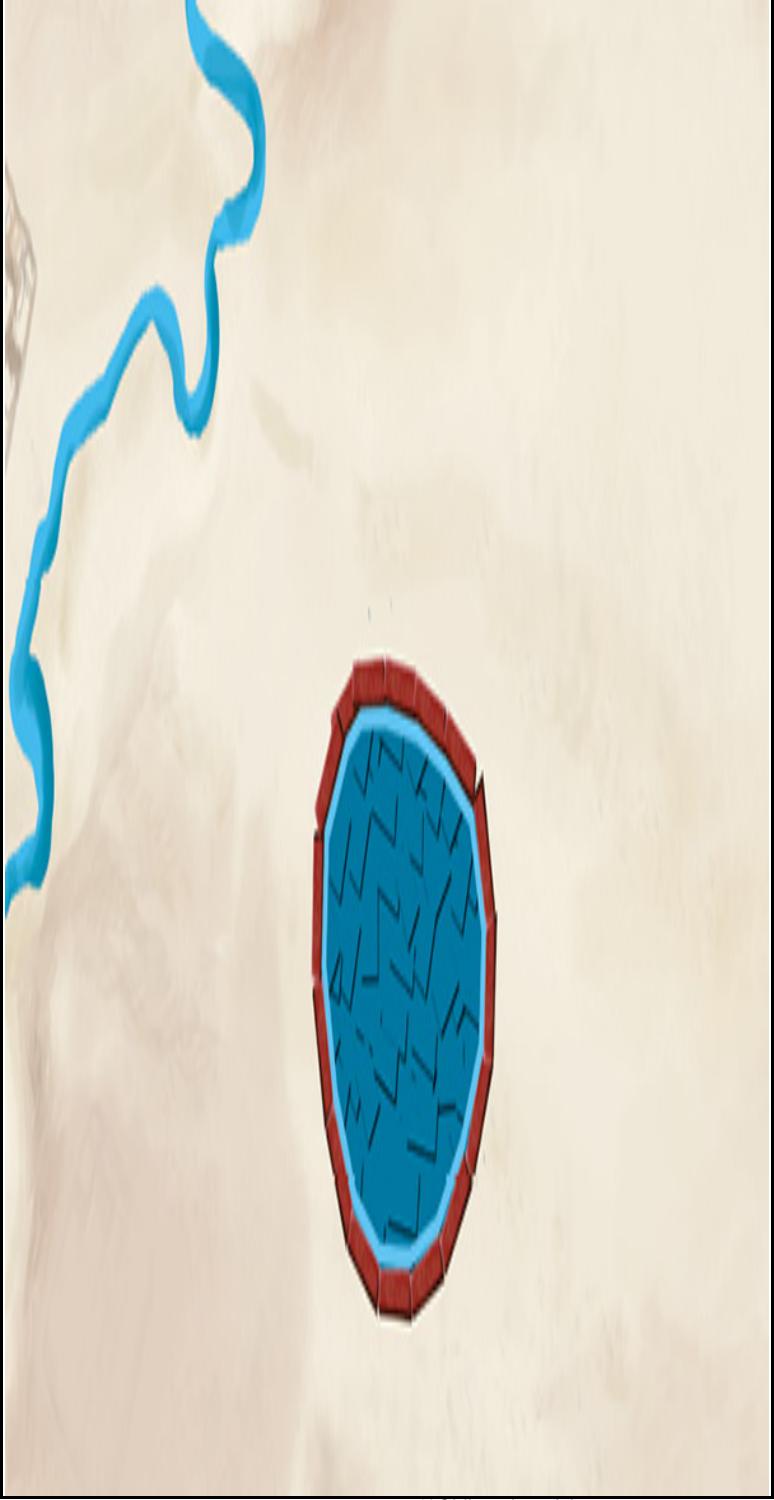
DEFEAT OF THE ALLIED CAVALRY

After having annihilated Aemilius Paullus' cavalry, Hasdrubal reformed his squadrons and rejoined the Numidian cavalry at the other flank of the battle, who had been given orders to delay by making diversionary maneuvers. Then the two carthaginian cavalries enveloped the Roman allied cavalry in a pincer movement.

The Roman cavalrymen were either killed or dispersed. Hasdrubal allowed the Numidians to pursue survivors, and after reforming his cavalry once again, he charged at the rear of the legionaries.

ULTIMATE ENCIRCLEMENT





4/ Obliteration of the center

This maneuver ultimately closed the trap. For the Romans, retreat or flight

were no longer possible. Pressed against one another, constricted from all sides, ranks of legionaries were crammed until they were motionless. Only the Roman soldiers on the periphery were able to fight against Hannibal's forces.

STRIKE FORCE OF THE ROMAN ARMY WAS DIVIDED BY 70

The number of Roman soldiers who were in direct contact with the Carthaginians was negligible.

For the sake of analysis we may conjecture : 70,000 men trapped forming a more or less circular mass in which each one of them, carrying shield and sword, occupies a square meter. Calculation of the perimeter of this mass is about one kilometer. A count of one soldier per linear meter on the confines, amounts to only one Roman out of seventy, being in contact with Hannibal's soldiers. In other terms, although to start off with, Roman forces were combating at a numerical superiority of three against one, Hannibal's tactic evened out the score by dividing the Roman strike force by seventy.

Outcome of the Victory

Never had such a huge army been so totally annihilated, without the victor incurring any comparable losses. The Battle of Cannae cost Hannibal less than than 6,000 men, whereas 90,000 Romans lay prostrate on the battleground, among them Consul Aemilius Paullus, Proconsul Servilius, two-thirds of senior officers and 177 high-ranking senators. The other consul, Marcus Varro, had escaped from the battlefield and taken refuge in Venosa, with a few thousand survivors. The garrison of the great camp counting about 10,000 men⁹⁵, fell in its entirety into the hands of the Carthaginians, while a few thousand other soldiers barricaded themselves in Canusium⁹⁶.

Capture of Rome : a false issue

Since Antiquity, the question of the so-called failure of Hannibal to capture Rome has obsessed the greatest part of those interested in this conflict. To understand the causes and the consequences of this issue, it is first necessary to better grasp the military aspect of the question, as well as to ponder on Hannibal's intentions. We will see that his design was actually perfectly substantiated by the strategy that he had developed, since the triggering of hostilities.

ABSENCE OF SIEGE WEAPONRY

The arduousness of giving siege should be taken into account. The siege of Saguntum had fully absorbed Hannibal for more than seven long months, although at that time he had available the adequate weaponry, which he didn't in Italy. A siege of Rome, that was protected by a triple fortified enclosure, would have compelled him to mobilize his army for long years in hostile territory, without being able to count on reinforcements or even on supplies.

NECESSARY RESPITE OF THE ARMY

From a military point of view, a key element should be clarified : Cannae was a terrible battle for Hannibal's army. Since Cartagena, after each great ordeal, the Carthaginian had allowed his men a period of rest. How could his soldiers, after the tremendous energy expended at Cannae, take the road to Rome and then besiege it ? This reasoning is of course valid for all the corps of Hannibal's army, including the cavalry.

THE BESIEGER RISKED BEING BESIEGED

Furthermore, besieging Rome represented for the Carthaginians the risk of being in turn besieged. Indeed, the topography of Rome and its position at the center of Latium⁹⁷ were conducive to this threat.

Rome had available many other legions

Furthermore, though seven legions had been destroyed, Rome had available many others already mobilized and able to converge on the metropolis within a few weeks.

IMPOSSIBLE BLOCKADE

One must not forget that the river Tiber which flows through Rome is a natural supply route, joined by other internal waterways that could not be sealed off. Also, the Roman fleet had been ready to transport provisions to the city since the days after Trasimene. It is well known that a siege without a blockade on supplies is senseless.

SCORCHED EARTH POLICY

Besides, the Roman army was ready to proceed with the strategy that it had adopted after Trasimene, that is to say, evacuating exposed localities, regrouping displaced populations and above all, applying a scorched earth policy to prevent the Carthaginian army from collecting provisions, thus ensuring their ultimate starvation.

TACTICAL WAR WOULD TURN INTO MASS SLAUGHTER

A siege of Rome especially threatened to cause uprisings against Hannibal from Latins, who would have turned the war into a massacre of civilians, children, women and elderly included. Hannibal's spirited and imaginative strategy would have turned into a loathsome bloodbath, in total contradiction with what the man stood for and what his project hoped to achieve.

The image of Hannibal in the guise of a Hercules liberating Italics by rescuing them from their evil kings, would have been seriously tarnished. In fact, Hannibal was utterly opposed to this barbarous perspective and assured his Roman captives the day after the famous battle : «*I am not waging a war of extermination, it is in order to maintain the leading position of my country and to ensure its hegemony (imperium) that I combat.*»⁹⁸

Hannibal's very education explained his refusal of a war of extermination. Indeed, he had been trained in the noble profession of soldiery from a young age, and this lifelong learning had been achieved through direct contact with martial

reality. In his training, he had been sustained by two prestigious role models : his father, who solely carried on his shoulders the rebirth of Carthaginian power, and Alexander the Great, whose history was taught him by Sosylos, his Greek tutor. «*These two models had been decisive in convincing Hannibal that war was not a gratuitous activity and that if one used the sword, it had to be to edify a world.*»⁹⁹

Imbued with Hellenism, Hannibal dreamed of a world united in both independence and the specificity of civilizations. He wanted to put a halt to Roman imperialism, compel Rome to acknowledge defeat and agree to concluding a treaty that would annul that of 241¹⁰⁰, as well as return their independence to the Italic people.

10 - After Cannae

Would Hannibal's prodigious victory give rise to an era of successes for his vast political alliances, which had been the objective of his campaign in Italy ? The Carthaginian dreamed of the total realization of his plan, but in the mean time, reinforcements he was counting on from Carthage, Spain and Greece, were not forthcoming.

Situation in Carthage

Before Cannae, Carthaginian fleets had threatened the Roman Islands and the Italian shorelines to prevent any landing in Africa. But their endeavors stopped there. Rome had blocked access to its coasts and Hannibal did not dispose of a single landing port in Italy.

The Carthaginian Conservatives had constantly disparaged Hannibal's actions, refusing to finance his military campaign. However, information about the triumph at Cannae subdued them.

Sent to Carthage, Mago was greeted jubilantly by the people. He requested reinforcements from the Senate and offered them the symbol of Hannibal's triumph : an earthenware urn filled with the gold rings of Roman aristocrats fallen at Cannae. Confronted to popular pressure and with bad grace, the Senate agreed to send reinforcements : Numidian squadrons would be provided to Hannibal and the war would be energetically driven in Italy and in Spain.

But as we will see, as soon as popular rejoicing abated, the major part of these reinforcements was sent to Spain.

Situation in the Iberian peninsula

Having landed in Ampurias, after the Carthaginians crossed the Rhône, Gnaeus Scipio occupied the coast between the Pyrenees and the Ebro, then repelling Hanno, he penetrated far inside the land (218). The following year, he defeated the Carthaginian fleet near the mouth of the river Ebro. Then, joined by his brother who brought him 8,000 men as reinforcements, he crossed the river and

progressed to Saguntum.

The Carthaginian government chose to halt the Roman advance in Spain, this can only be interpreted as an attempt to sabotage Hannibal's plans. They should have sent reinforcements to Italy, the source of Roman power, to consolidate ¹⁰¹ Hannibal's victories.

Situation in Greece : alliance between Carthage and Macedonia

Hannibal had negotiated an offensive alliance with Macedonia, but Philip's wavering and the useless war launched with his Greek allies against the Aetolians (220-217) had made his offensive in Italy impossible. However, after the triumph of Cannae, Philip finally signed the treaty ¹⁰² of 216 with the Carthaginians. This treaty stipulated that Macedonia would deploy an army on the oriental coast of Italy and that in return, Carthage would ensure restitution of Roman possessions in Greece.

Situation in Sicily : alliance with Syracuse

When Carthage had been enduring the Mercenary War, King Hiero of Syracuse had assisted Carthage by supplying wheat. But in the course of this new war, he remained prudently loyal to Rome. He died in the autumn of 215 and was succeeded by his grandson Hieronymus. The latter received Carthaginian envoys who promised him the whole of Sicily. He then signed an alliance treaty between Syracuse and Carthage, and united his fleet to Carthage's fleet at the moment when it arrived in view of Syracuse.

As for the Roman fleet of Lilybaeum, it had already endured the Carthaginian ships that had been stationed at the Aegates Islands at the beginning of the Second War. Now it was greatly weakened by the disaster of Cannae, which had impeded them from embarking reinforcements to Sicily.

Dismantling of the Roman Confederation

In Italy, events took a more decisive turn : after two years of a terrible war, the Roman Confederation seemed to be finally crumbling. Arpi in Apulia pledged allegiance to Hannibal, as well as Uzentum in Messapia. These two ancient cities had suffered terribly from the neighboring Roman colonies, Lucera and Brundisium. Bruttium also rallied Hannibal's cause. The Lucanians, the Picentes, the Hirpini, the Samnites and especially Capua, second town of Italy (able to provide 30,000 foot soldiers and 4,000 horses) all defected to Hannibal and these tribes and towns allied. Capua's example incited neighboring Atela and Calatia to follow her lead and defect to Hannibal. However, conservatives everywhere and notably in Capua, linked to Rome by interest, held out against freedom parties causing internal strife.

On the other hand, the Greeks of south Italy held strong. Those of Campania and Neapolis for instance, resisted attacks directed by Hannibal in person. In the south, in spite of all the dangers they were exposed to, Rhegium, Thurii, Metapontum and Tarentum did not open their gates. Crotone and Locri, were compelled to capitulate to the Carthaginians and united with the Bruttians.

However, Latins of the south, in Brundisium, Venosa, Paestum, Cosa and Cales did not shift, as for them it was a matter of survival. In fact, these were veritable Roman citadels founded at the heart of the foreign country. Settlers established on these lands that had been confiscated from their inhabitants, would be the first to suffer, if Hannibal held his promise and restored their ancient territories to the Italic cities. For the whole of central Italy, the antique domain of Rome, customs and Latin languages were predominant and their inhabitants were the associates of Rome, not their subjects. They obviously remained loyal to Rome.

Hannibal's political adversaries at the Senate of Carthage grasped at this fallacious argument, declaring that not a single Latin city had defected.

Rome refused to concede defeat

At the end of 216, between 25 and 30%¹⁰³ of Italics in age of bearing arms had perished. Far more than necessary to acknowledge defeat. But Rome refused to sign a truce, because she knew that Hannibal was not in Italy to wage a war of conquest, or a war of extermination.

Faced with the Carthaginian peril, the Senate called for civil concord to put a stop to all the gossip of the Forum. Fabius and all senators were attempting to renew the people's confidence in themselves. At a time in which Italy seemed lost, and Rome was exposed to assault from the enemy, the Senate succeeded in maintaining its usual firmness.

Yet, messengers were arriving from all parts, announcing defeats, defection of allies and seizing of army posts and stores.

The Senate forbade crowds from gathering, women and idle people were to stay in their homes. Mourning was limited to thirty days¹⁰⁴.

Meanwhile, legionaries who had survived the Battle of Cannae gathered in Canusium under the orders of two military tribunes - Appius Claudius and Publius Scipio (the son) – who had fled from the battlefield. Varro joined them, accompanied by a handful of soldiers. Little by little, two legions were assembled and reformed for unpaid service. Praetor Claudius Marcellus, an outstanding officer, took on the role of commander of these troops.

Rome was making most energetic efforts to establish a new army. Latins were asked to come to the rescue of the Republic. Rome led by example, enrolling all the population in age of combating, even adolescents. All convicts were armed, even criminals, and the quite exceptional step of buying thousands of slaves to conscript them was taken.

Lack of weaponry led them to requisition arms placed in temples, that had been offered the gods as enemy spoils. Everywhere, laborers and blacksmiths were toiling night and day.

Finally, when Hannibal initiated a negotiation, offering to surrender prisoners in return for public ransom, his proposition was rejected ; his envoys were not even received in the city. The Senate did not want it to be thought that it was pondering a truce.

As though there had not been sufficient disasters that year, a Roman army led to Gaul by Consul-designate in absentia, Lucius Postumius Albinus, was ambushed in a forest in the Po Plain. Gauls had sown off thousands of trees that remained standing, but if given a slight push would topple over. Then they lured the two Roman legions into the trap and felled a row of trees so that by a domino effect, the thousands of trees previously hacked, crashed down over the legions. Postumius and a few survivors attempted to flee, but the Boii slaughtered them. According to Livy, the consul's skull was covered in gold and turned into a sacrificial bowl.

Only ten Romans survived. Lucius Postumius was replaced as consul by Fabius Maximus.

State of affairs

At the end of the third year of his campaign, Hannibal had best achieved all outcomes possible in terms of dismantling the Italic Confederation.

It was evident that Greek and Latin (or latinized) cities would only yield to force. The desperate defense of a few fortified cities located in southern Italy showed Hannibal what he could expect from the Marsi¹⁰⁵ and Latins. Moreover, the coalition of Italics of the south was far from offering him substantial benefits : Capua had stipulated in the alliance treaty that Hannibal could not constrain Capuans to enlist and take up arms. Furthermore, the perpetual stranglehold exercised by Roman fortresses over Samnium and Lucania, had choked all energy and strength out of their inhabitants, to the extent that they had forgotten how to use weapons, and only sent Hannibal weak contingents of bad soldiers.

Due to these circumstances, war had been brought to a standstill. Master of the entire south of the Italic peninsula up to the Volturnus and Mount Gargano, Hannibal imperatively had to defend his border or risk losing it. Yet, his army counting 40,000 men at the utmost (after deduction of useless Italic allied contingents), was far from sufficient to occupy a country which was bristling with strongholds, even though it had been conquered.

Rome's refusal to combat

For the Romans, flight was the only strategy envisaged against Hannibal. Therefore, they only appointed at the head of their armies, generals who bowed down to this requisite.

Without reinforcements, Hannibal was unable to provide garrisons to all the cities that had pledged to him. Rome leapt at this chance, ordering her generals to attack Hannibal's defenseless allies. Thus it was, that hidden behind their entrenched camps and the fortified walls of their bastions, the Romans only agreed to combat in the absence of the Carthaginian.

Marcellus

In the wake of Cannae, Claudio Marcellus was entrusted with the command of Roman forces. Tried and tested by the terrible combats against Hamilcar in Sicily,

he had proved his talent as a military commander in the last campaigns against the Gauls in Cisalpina.

Hannibal in Campania

In order to reach his strategic objective, Hannibal had to proceed with the dismantling of the Italic Confederation. Which is why, rather than wasting his time in vain gesticulations in front of Rome's fortified palisades, Hannibal went straight to Capua, before the Romans attacked the rebel city. From there, Hannibal was hoping to become master of one of the Campanian ports, which he could then use to receive the reinforcements crucial to the pursuit of war.

War was resumed in Campania

At the news of this maneuver, the Romans gathered all the forces they had left in the north of Capua, on the right bank of the Volturnus. With the survivors of Cannae, and the troops of Rome and Ostia, Marcellus marched on Teanum¹⁰⁶. Marcellus then advanced rapidly on the river to Casilinum, followed by Dictator Marcus Junius and the main precipitously gathered army, to try to prevent the rallying of Capua. But Hannibal had already occupied it and was about to seize Naples. However, the Romans succeeded in garrisoning the valuable maritime city. Two other major coastal cities, Cumae and Nuceria remained loyal to Rome. At Nola, people were for Carthage and the Senate for Rome. Warned of the imminent victory of the Democratic party, Marcellus crossed the river at Calatia, skirted the Carthaginian army by the heights of Suessula, and arrived in Nola just in time to defend the Senate against the people.

Still, Hannibal seized Nuceria, Acerra and after an unrelenting siege that lasted until the following year (215), he took Casilinum, key to the Volturnus.

With the coming of winter, the war ceased for a while and Hannibal quartered in Capua.

DELIGHTS OF CAPUA

Livy¹⁰⁷ declared that the Carthaginian army lost its soul and its will to combat, seduced by the famous «*delights of Capua*», but this assertion, absent from Polybius' books, does not stand up to scrutiny. In actual fact, for twelve more years before Hannibal left Italy, his army would inspire terror in Roman forces ten times superior in numbers. They trembled in fear of it and never dared to confront it in pitched battle, except if they were forced to, because no escape route or fallback solution were available.

The Romans surrounded Capua

In 215, the war took on a different turn. Proconsul Marcellus and Consuls Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus and Quintus Fabius Maximus headed three armies that had as mission to surround Capua. Marcellus relied on Nola and Suessula¹⁰⁸, Fabius Maximus was posted in Calvi on the right bank of the Volturnus, and Gracchus in Liternum on the coast, from which he covered Naples and Cumae. The Campanians who had advanced to Hamae, in order to surprise Cumae three miles further, were defeated by Gracchus. Hannibal arrived, but the enemy

refused to fight. While the Romans thus defended their territory in Campania, taking Compulteria back and other small places they had lost, Hannibal was subjected to complaints from his eastern allies.

In Apulia

A Roman army under the orders of Praetor Marcus Valerius established itself in Lucera, rallying the fleet to watch over the Adriatic Coast and the motions in Macedonia. It had also reinforced the corps at Nola and ravaged the lands of Hannibal's allies, the Samnites, the Lucanians and the Hirpini. Hannibal attacked Marcellus who took refuge behind the walls of Nola. Therefore, without having been able to restore the situation in their favor in Campania, the Carthaginians marched on Arpi, to halt the progress of the Apulia army. Gracchus followed them with his troops, while the other two Roman armies bore down and prepared to attack Capua in the spring.

In Carthage

Carthage had not been affected by the war. Thanks to the Barcids, she had not only reconquered her power, but she was within an inch of ultimate triumph. Nothing could have logically prevented the reinforcements that Hannibal was expecting to conclusively subdue Rome from reaching him. A big Carthaginian fleet could have landed in Locri or Crotone, or even in allied Syracuse who had opened her port to Carthage. But the government prevaricated, and finally only 4,000 Carthaginians under the orders of Bomilcar were sent and landed in Locri. Feelings of elation induced in the Carthaginians by the victory at Cannae did not last. The anti-Barcid faction led by Hanno¹⁰⁹ succeeded in postponing Hannibal's urgent demands, offering him the excuse that since he was the victor, he did not need relief.

In reality, it was Carthage's inertia that saved Rome.

Brought up in military camps and despising the vileness of politicians, Hannibal could not, as military commander, stoop so low as to interfere in Carthaginian politics. Furthermore, although Hannibal enjoyed limitless popularity, he also endured permanent conspiracies. Therefore, he had to look elsewhere for the means to win the war, even though Carthage had every resource imaginable at her fingertips. Assuredly, she sent reinforcements, but it was only a symbolic number designed to appease popular pressure. A decisive war effort likely to ensure Carthage's ultimate triumph over Rome, was not even attempted.

Hannibal had three other possible sources for reinforcements : Spain, Syracuse and Macedonia. The Carthaginian asked them for new combatants, but Rome, conscious as she was of her inability to defeat Hannibal, decided to block those three fronts in the hope of finally prevailing.

Besides obstructing the Pyrenees' passes, Rome resolved to occupy Macedonia and to isolate Sicily. All Romans labored intensely on the crucial task of preventing the arrival of reinforcements.

In Spain

With regards to Spain, the Battle of the Ebro had such unfortunate consequences for Hasdrubal, that Carthage had been compelled to send reinforcements there, in men and coin, that she was planning to send to Italy. However, the situation had not improved for all that. The following year (215), the Scipios shifted the war front from the Ebro to the Baetis¹¹⁰, and the Carthaginians suffered two defeats at Illiturgis and Intibili.

Failure to recover Sardinia

Sardinia, was the most advantageous base between Spain and Italy. Carthage had a network of Sardinian spies, however, when Titus Manlius Torquatus was sent to Rome with an army, he destroyed the Carthaginian corps landing there.

In Sicily

Exiled fugitives from the legions of Cannae had to defend themselves against Carthaginians and against Hieronymus, in the north, and in the east of Sicily where they had been banished.

Macedonia

The Carthaginian alliance with Macedonia remained without effect. The invasion that Hannibal had so anticipated did not happen. Thus, the Romans had enough time to shield with their fleet the all important Brundisium, which was defended on land by provincial militias, right up until the arrival of Gracchus' corps.

Furthermore, Rome had made preparations for a raid on Macedonia, in the case of a war declaration.

Rome coped with defeat while Carthage schemed

Consequently, while Rome avoided the great battles in Italy, Carthage made no move to send the fresh armies and fleets that Hannibal so needed.

The euphoria occasioned by the victory at Cannae had vanished, and Hannibal's political enemies had dispelled the prospective of mobilizing a considerable combat force. In short, by the end of 215, the hour of great peril for Rome had slipped by. As long as her armies did not have to fight Hannibal in person, and as long as no reinforcements arrived for him, the state of affairs though disastrous, remained governable for Rome, even though it was at the price of incessant humiliations.

11 - Archimedes, Hannibal's Ally

Hannibal had not intended to wage war in Sicily, however a local uprising had erupted there resulting in this consequence. His ally Hieronymus had been killed at the end of 214, and conservative Syracusans were trying to ally their city to Rome again. Marcellus, charged with the command of operations during the

campaign of 214 landed in Syracuse, and conservatives witnessed with awe the huge preparations made by Romans to bring the island back under their domination. The conservatives were willing to consider an alliance with Rome, but the Syracusan people, in the name of freedom and democracy, wanted to safeguard their alliance with Carthage. Among the soldiers, were the defectors of the Roman army and fleet. Rumor had it that peace with Rome would result in a death sentence for them. Hippocrates and his younger brother Epycides¹¹¹ were appointed to command the city's defense. Marcellus immediately proceeded to besiege Syracuse, defended vigorously by the two brothers, with the help of the famous scientist Archimedes, the very spirit of resistance against Rome.

Archimedes, incarnation of defense in Syracuse

Syracuse was a gigantic city, one of the most beautiful cities of Antiquity, shielded by defensive ramparts culminating in a fortress. It was impregnable, however Polybius had claimed that very extensive cities always had poorly guarded areas. Hiero, master of the city for half a century, had thoroughly armed it. He had convinced the great Archimedes to apply mathematics to the designing of weaponry, by which method impressive equipment had been constructed to preserve the city against a siege. After Hiero's death and the murder of young Hieronymus, democracy was proclaimed and Archimedes assumed command of the city's defense operations.

During the first year of the siege, he subjected the two consuls¹¹² to an extraordinary series of disasters.

Polybius wrote that *Appius and Marcellus* «decided to attack [...] with their land forces [...] and with their fleet [...], where the wall reaches down to the very edge of the sea. Having got ready their blindages, missiles, and other siege material, they were in high hopes owing to their large numbers that in five days their works would be much more advanced than those of the enemy, but instead they did not reckon with the ability of Archimedes, or foresee that in some cases the genius of one man accomplishes much more than any number of hands¹¹³».

Archimedes had planned such a panoply of defense measures, that the Romans were caught completely off guard. The Syracusans had a parade ready for any action undertaken by the enemies.

Equipped with mantlets and scaling ladders, Consul Appius endeavored to use them against city fortifications, while Marcellus directed sixty quinqueremes, full of men armed with bows and arrows, slings and javelins against the port. Their role consisted in driving back bulwark defenders, to facilitate setting up the «sambuca», a ship-borne siege engine.

THE SAMBUCA

The sambuca¹¹⁴ was an armored mobile footbridge carried by ship, and intended for hoisting over the ramparts of a city. In the form of a tunnel, two meters in height and one meter twenty in width, it was long enough¹¹⁵ to reach the top of the battlements, while maintaining an angle allowing for

soldiers to advance rapidly. Before being set up, it was laid down flat at the center, between two rows of four quinqueremes, placed one behind the other. On the top of the ships' masts, pulleys were fastened with ropes. At the moment of hoisting, the ropes attached to the sambuca were dragged through these pulleys by men standing at the stern, while others standing on the prows, assisted leverage by supporting and steadyng the sambuca with poles. Then, thanks to the rows of outer oars placed on each side of the vessel, the ships were brought close to the ramparts and they hoisted the front of the sambuca, formed of a platform armored on three sides over the battlements. To start with, only four combatants entered it to confront fortifications' defenders. Once the sambuca was fully set up, an unbroken stream of assailants engulfed into the bridgehead to invade the town.

DEFENSE DEVICES

Archimedes had prepared a number of defensive devices. When the enemy vessels closed in on the shore, his most powerful catapults were hurled at them, wreaking havoc with projectiles of up to 350 kilos in weight. Later, when the range for these weapons became too long, he successively used smaller ones, according to the new distance, causing such confusion that he completely halted their progress.

Confronted to this arduous plight, Marcellus decided to approach stealthily, in the dark of night. But when his men arrived near the shore, the blind spot for catapults, another of Archimedes' devices expected them.

The scientist had made openings in the ramparts of about twelve centimeters, behind which he had posted archers armed with repeating crossbows, «polybolos», that fired with high cadence against soldiers incapacitating them in no time.

To invalidate the «sambuca» siege bridgehead, Archimedes had set up an ingenious device.

THE CLAW OF ARCHIMEDES

This device was a large grappling hook, an «iron hand» or «claw» that first threw rocks on the assailants to compel them to leave the prow of the ship. The grappling hook was suspended on a chain and was stabilized at the other end by a sliding counterweight. It dropped down from the defensive wall upon the enemy ship, hooked into its prow, lifting it then allowing it to plummet. Those in charge of managing the grappling hook, controlled the sliding of the counterweight to a fixed point, then loosened the chain and the iron claw, thus knocking the ship off balance and capsizing it. In most cases, the ship nosedived and took water, provoking panic on board.

ARCHIMEDES' HEAT RAY

We owe to Anthemius of Tralles, a Byzantine scientist of the 6th century CE, the narrative relating to Archimedes' parabolic mirrors, devised to set fire to the sails of Roman ships come to besiege Syracuse. Large mirrors of shiny metal

reflected the sun's rays onto enemy ship sails, thus setting them on fire. Archimedes' mirrors were long considered a myth, however these past few years modern recreations of this weapon realized with ancient materials, have proved the effectiveness of the device.

ROMANS RENOUNCED STORMING THE FORTRESS

The predicament the Romans found themselves in, tossed into the sea with their breastplates, made the whole town hoot with laughter. This state of affairs concerned Roman officers and after a council of war, they unanimously decided to attempt all other tactics, except for storming the fortress of Syracuse. During the eight months of siege, without renouncing any stratagem or daring stroke, they never again ventured to storm the fortress.

Archimedes' genius had prevailed over the Roman legions.

Subsequently, estimating that causing a famine would be the best weapon to vanquish the besieged, the Romans organized a sea and land blockade.

Carthaginian Expedition to Sicily

Hearing that Syracusans were being attacked again, Carthage, who had until then only helped them with her supporting fleets, decided to send an army under the orders of Himilco. The army landed in Heraclea Minoa and immediately occupied Agrigentum. Hippocrates, wanting to lend a helping hand, left Syracuse with another corps of troops, and Marcellus was thus surrounded between the besieged city and the two generals. Reinforcements had however arrived from Italy, so he managed to hold on to his position and maintained the blockade.

In the mean time, most of the little cities in Sicily had allied themselves to the Carthaginians, not through fear of Carthage and Syracuse, but because of the terrorism perpetrated by Romans, who had, among other misdeeds, slaughtered the inhabitants of Enna on a mere suspicion of treachery.

The Romans captured the first fortified wall

However in 212, while Syracuse was celebrating, the Romans managed to clamber over the fortified outside wall deserted by sentinels. They entered the suburbs succeeding the actual town and seized the citadel of Euryalos. But at the moment when the siege seemed to be taking a positive turn for the Romans, Himilco and Hippocrates' two armies rushed there, combining their attack with a landing of the African fleet and an exit of the besieged.

The Carthaginian troops, consumed by illness

The Romans resisted and safeguarded their positions. The two Carthaginian-Syracusan armies had to content themselves with establishing their camp in the middle of the pestilential Anapus marshes, deadly for anyone lingering there in summer or autumn. These marshes had often saved Syracuse in the past, but this time they would cause her downfall. While Marcellus stationed in the inner suburbs, benefited from a safe and healthy refuge, fevers decimated Carthaginians and Syracusans. Hippocrates and Himilco died, and with them the

major part of the troops of both armies. Survivors dispersed in the neighboring cities. The Carthaginians made a new attempt to land forces, but the fleet from Rome arrived in far greater numbers and Bomilcar, the Carthaginian admiral, had to steer clear from a losing battle.

Epicydes, who was leading the defense lost hope and fled to Agrigentum. The Syracusans wanted to capitulate and negotiations started, however, they failed for the second time, because of the defectors. The soldiers revolted again and handed all powers into the hands of foreign generals. Marcellus infiltrated their ranks, and engaged in intelligence with one of them who surrendered the «island».

Capture of Syracuse

The people then decided to also open the gates to Lachradina (autumn of 212). Marcellus instantly invaded it, and subsequently disgraced his honor as a warrior by undertaking the looting of the prestigious city.

The illustrious Archimedes was assassinated with a great number of his fellow citizens. As for the Roman Senate, complicit in the crimes of its army, it did not heed the belated complaints of unfortunate inhabitants, declined to return their looted property and refused to restore freedom to their city. Syracuse and cities belonging to her lost their independence. Only Tauromenium¹¹⁶ and Netum¹¹⁷ obtained the status of Messina. The territory of Leontium was declared Rome's public domain, and its owners became ordinary farmers.

Hannibal, determined to save Sicily

Sicily again seemed lost to Carthage. Hannibal gathered his staff and decided to send the Carthaginian army in Sicily (now reunited with its commanders Hanno and Epicydes in Agrigentum), one of his most brilliant cavalry officers, Mutines, at the head of the powerful Numidian cavalry. Roaming around the island with his swift squadrons, Mutines ignited the spirit of revenge engendered in all by the savagery of Romans, and he organized a general uprising in Sicily. The Roman and Carthaginian armies met at Himera and the brilliant Mutines triumphed over Marcellus.

Soon however, the dispute between Hannibal and the Senate of Carthage led to disaster. The Senate wanted to send a general appointed by them, thus the envoy from Carthage dismissed Hannibal's men, and demanded to continue combat without Mutines and his Numidians. He did as he pleased and was completely defeated. In spite of this, Mutines persisted with his guerilla, maintaining himself inside the island, occupying a few small cities, and when Carthage finally sent some reinforcements, he gradually spread out his operations. However, jealous of Mutines' exploits, Hanno abruptly relieved him of his command and gave it to his own son.

Agrigentum occupied by the Romans

Mutines thus withdrew from Agrigentum and almost immediately fell into Roman hands. The younger Hanno fled on a raft, the entire garrison was then put

to the sword and citizens were sold as slaves (210). To prevent future unexpected landings like that of 214, a colony was sent to the city and from that day onwards, the magnificent Akragas became a Roman fortress, receiving the latin name of Agrigentum.

Carthage had thus done everything in her power to ensure Sicily's falling into Roman hands. It was henceforth clear to Hannibal that Hanno's clan had vowed his downfall.

Pacification of Sicily

The whole of Sicily was subjugated. Inhabitants amassed in bulk were deported to Italy. From Rhegium, they were flung onto the lands of Hannibal's allies, to put them to fire and the sword.

12 - Protraction of the War

In Orient

The Oriental States remained neutral. Threatened by an unstable situation, Antiochus the Great, natural ally of Philip of Macedon, did not participate in the grand coalition against Rome that Hannibal had called for. The court of Egypt sided with Rome, but the help from Egypt consisted only in vessels loaded with wheat.

War in Greece

Only Macedonia and Greece were left. They could have changed the course of the war and nothing prevented them from it, except for their rivalry. Voices rose to exhort an entente. The influent Agelaeus of Naupactus¹¹⁸ advised the Greek to «turn their looks to the west and not to allow that a mightier force put under the same yoke, all the rivals of today in arms against each other!»¹¹⁹. These grave words contributed to the achievement of the peace of 217 between Philip and the Aetolians. It seemed henceforth possible to lead the Greek people into a national war against Rome. Being the commander of the war reverted by right to Philip, however, he proved himself incapable of bringing the Greeks together. Already, his slowness in concluding the alliance with Hannibal, had diminished prime motivation of patriots. Even when he finally committed to combat, the second-rate commander he proved to be, could neither inspire confidence nor empathy for him among Greeks.

In 216, before officially breaking away from Rome, Philip attempted a first assault on Apollonia and lamentably retreated at the first unfounded rumor, that a Roman fleet had appeared in the Adriatic. When the war against Rome was finally declared, the Macedonians' attack on Italy appeared to be imminent. However, since 215, the Romans had maintained an army and a fleet in Brundisium to waylay them. Philip had a flotilla built to transport his troops, but at the decisive moment, he became alarmed and did not dare to confront the Roman quinqueremes. Failing to commit to the pledge given to Hannibal of taking up arms against Romans on Italian soil, Philip finally decided to attack Roman possessions in Epirus (214). It was his promised share of the spoils. Already enduring Hannibal's presence on her territory, Rome did not want to give Philip the impression that she would remain passive before his attacks. The Brundisium fleet received the order to transport an army corps to the other side of the Gulf, to Epirus.

Oricum was retaken, a garrison was placed on Apollonia, and the Macedonian camp was cleared away. The dithering Philip went from halfway action to total inaction, and did not make another move for many years.

Hannibal vainly reproached him for his idleness and the narrowness of his

vision.

War in Spain

In Spain, the fight intensified. It was also very uncertain, because of the inherent characteristics of the country and the customs of local tribes. Men from the countryside mustered at the first call to arms, but refused to confront the enemy and rapidly dispersed. As for the inhabitants of the cities, regardless of their courage in defending themselves behind their fortified walls, they did not lend themselves effectively to offensive actions.

Carthaginians and Romans shared the peninsula, the former on the side of the Ebro, and the latter on the side of the Guadalquivir. The Iberians were not concerned. Apart from Sagunto, allied to the Romans, and Astapa¹²⁰ allied to the Carthaginians, it was rare for cities to put themselves into the service of either of the belligerents. However, as neither the Romans nor the Carthaginians had the means of forcing a definite outcome, the war degenerated into a propaganda war, in which fear, money and chance often came into play. The war at times turned into an incessant guerilla, then it suddenly was reborn of its ashes and erupted everywhere.

The narratives of annalists are incomplete, dates are uncertain and it is thus impossible to draw an accurate picture of this episode of the war.

The two Roman Proconsuls Gnaeus and Publius Scipio, whose role it was to prevent the sending of reinforcements to Hannibal, blocked the Pyrenees' barrier, and thwarted all Carthaginian attempts to restore communications between Hannibal's army and its stores in Spain. They surrounded Tarragona with extensive fortifications and built a port there, modelled on that of Cartagena.

From 215, the Romans waged battle against the Carthaginians in the very heart of Andalusia. In 214, the Scipios bore their weapons faraway towards the south. Finally, with the recapture of Saguntum, they had at their disposal an important base on the road to Cartagena.

War in Africa

Around 213, the Romans had collaborated with Syphax¹²¹, the most powerful of Numidian chiefs. Given the impossibility of sending a whole army there, a few Roman officers had been sent to train the troops of the African chief. Such confusion and such a spirit of revolt had been sparked, that Hasdrubal Barca in person had had to cross the sea again with the bulk of his best soldiers.

After King Gaia¹²², Syphax's old rival, had pledged allegiance to Carthage and after Hasdrubal and Masinissa (Gaia's son) had vanquished Syphax and constrained him to make peace, the Carthaginian army had entered Spain (211) with fresh reinforcements, among whom was Masinissa.

War in Italy (214-210)

While in Sicily, Greece and Spain, Romans were trying to prevent the reinforcements Hannibal needed to subject Rome from reaching him, the huge

struggle continued without respite in Italy.

Two years after Cannae in 214, Hannibal had left for the south, and northern Italy was again occupied. Three legions were deployed there, two in Gaul Cisalpina and the third one was stationed in Picenum as a reserve, ready to be transported wherever necessary.

In the south, apart from fortresses and a few seaports, half of Italy up to Gargano and the Volturnus belonged to Hannibal, who was stationed in Arpi with his principal army corps. Facing him was Tiberius Gracchus, at the head of 60,000 men, sheltering in the fortresses of Lucera and Beneventum. In Bruttium, where all inhabitants had become allied to the Carthaginians, all the ports were in Hannibal's hands except for Rhegium, that the Romans protected from Messina. Hanno occupied the region with a second corps, without encountering a single Roman army. Rome's consular army, numbering 60,000 men under the orders of Quintus Fabius Maximus and Marcus Marcellus, was preparing to attempt to recapture Capua.

Strength of Roman troops

In addition to the consular army and Gracchus' army, the Romans had available a reserve of 30,000 men in the metropolis and very substantial garrisons in the towns near Capua. The garrisons of seashore towns were reinforced by 15,000 men at Tarentum and at Brundisium, because a coastal invasion by Macedonians was feared. The fleet roamed the coasts watching out for potential aggressors. Rome also had armies in Sicily, Sardinia and Spain. The total number of troops armed by Rome, without counting the garrisons in towns of lower Italia which were all defended by inhabitants and settlers, can be evaluated at more than 350,000 men.

The entire valid population, from 17 to 46 years old was mobilized, leaving field cultivation to slaves, old men, children and women.

Economic situation and reconquering of lost territories

The state of public finances was catastrophic. Property tax, a main source of income was only very irregularly levied. Yet, despite the scarcity of funds and men, step by step the Romans reconquered the territories lost in the first period of the war. Every year, they recaptured something from Campanians, Apulians, Samnites and Bruttians, Hannibal's allies who were unable to defend themselves, and that Hannibal could not protect without stretching and scattering his forces.

He could still hope for victories, however, the Romans had the indisputable command of avoiding battle with him. The only way for him to regain the offensive, was to wait for either the long-promised landing by Philip, or the landing of his brothers from Spain.

Battles in lower Italy

At first, the war continued in Campania. Hannibal arrived there in time to protect Capua, but he did not succeed in capturing a single Campanian city from the Romans, as they had substantial garrisons watching over them. Neither did

he succeed in preventing the capture of Casilinum, his bridgehead on the Volturnus, that the two consular armies seized in spite of a dogged defense.

He attempted to seize Tarentum by surprise, as it would have been an ideal landing site for the Macedonians, but his attempt failed.

Meanwhile, the Carthaginian army of Bruttium led by general Hanno, was combating Tiberius Sempronius and Gracchus and his legions (reinforced by slaves) in Apulia. After his victory at Beneventum, the Roman granted these provisional soldiers their freedom and citizenship.

Arpi lost

The following year (213), the Romans recaptured the rich and foremost city of Arpi, whose inhabitants turned against the Carthaginian garrison, joined by a few Roman soldiers who had infiltrated the city. The alliance of the military league organized by Hannibal at the cost of considerable efforts was disbanding. Capuans defected and many towns in Bruttium rallied the Romans.

Capture of Tarentum by Hannibal

The citizens of Tarentum wanted to pledge allegiance to Hannibal. Thanks to some accomplices in situ, Hannibal succeeded in trapping the Roman garrison, that barely found time to seek refuge in the citadel. Heraclea Lucania, Thurium and Metapontum, whose garrisons rushed to the succour of the Acropolis of Taras, met the same fate.

First battle of Capua (213-212)

In Campania, main theater of the war, the situation was inconclusive. The Roman legions stationed in the surroundings of Capua hampered agriculture, thwarted harvesting, and the city's inhabitants were reduced to seeking provisions far from its walls. Hannibal undertook the task of personally organizing a large convoy, inviting Campanians to come and take delivery of victuals in Beneventum. However, they were delayed and Consuls Quintus Flaccus and Appius Claudius forestalling them, vanquished Hanno who was protecting the convoy, seized his camp and grabbed the victuals.

The two consuls then attacked Capua, while Tiberius Gracchus on the Appian Way tried to prevent Hannibal from succouring his ally.

Hannibal crushed Consul Tiberius Gracchus' army and emerged in front of the two consuls, who precipitously abandoned their siege. Before his arrival, the Roman cavalry had already been completely quashed by the Carthaginian and Campanian cavalries, under the united command of Hanno and Bostar.

Battle of the Silarus (212)

The long series of Roman disasters continued. Marcus Centenius, an officer in Appius Claudius' army, putting forward his exhaustive familiarity with the Campanian region, requested from the Senate an independent command to track Hannibal. The Senate acceded to his request and he was granted command of a legion of 16,000 men. He started to pursue Hannibal, but thanks to his scouts,

the latter localized the enemy army and set up an ambush at Silarus. The Romans were taken by surprise and put to rout, their Etruscan allies fled causing havoc. Livy specified that only one thousand survived.

Battle of Herdonia

Just a few days later, Praetor Gnaeus Fulvius Flaccus was defeated at Herdonia in Apulia. Hannibal appeared to have deployed all of his forces on the plain facing Flaccus' camp, but he discreetly sent 3,000 light infantry to his extreme left flank, to carry out a surprise attack from the woods. The Carthaginian also sent out 2,000 Numidian cavalry to occupy the roads in the rear of Fulvius' army, thus cutting off all escape routes. Fulvius was totally unaware of all these secret deployments. The attack had the effect of a thunderbolt on the astounded Romans. Hannibal's army quashed the two legions and Fulvius immediately fled the field with 200 soldiers. Out of nearly 30,000 Roman soldiers, roughly 2,000 were said to have survived the carnage.

Capua, surrounded by Romans

However, after these victories, as soon as Hannibal on his way to Apulia had his back turned to Capua, the Roman armies reformed and redeployed around the town again. One of the armies led by Appius Claudius stationed at Puteoli and Voltumnus, and the other under the orders of Quintus Fulvius, occupied Casilinum. A third army commanded by Praetor Claudius Nero watched over the road to Nola. Entrenched in their camps and linked by fortified lines, these three corps henceforth prohibited any passage. The great city thus hermetically sealed and insufficiently provided with victuals, faced inevitable capitulation, unless the Carthaginians succeeded in freeing it from the stranglehold.

At the end of the winter (212-211), Capua's resources had been exhausted. Her envoys struggled laboriously to get through Roman outposts, rushing to plead for Hannibal's help with their plight. At that time, Hannibal was engrossed with the siege of the citadel of Tarentum.

Nonetheless, the Carthaginian hastened to Campania with his best soldiers. He destroyed a Roman division stationed at Calatia¹²³ and installed his camp on Mount Tifata, near Capua.

The Roman generals had had the time to form their lines and entrenchments. Motionless, from the top of their ramparts, they calmly watched over the helpless attacks of the Campanian cavalry on the one hand, and the Numidians' equally powerless incursions on the other. Hannibal could not possibly conduct an assault within the customary rules of engagement, as he not only lacked troops, but also as his move on Capua would be likely to immediately draw to Campania all other Roman corps. He greatly risked being trapped, so the only solution for avoiding this was to create a diversion.

Battle at Rome

Hannibal asked the Campanians to carry on with the defense while he marched on Rome. He launched his small army against the enemy corps and Roman

fortresses, broke through the siege-lines and advanced towards Rome. Hannibal cut across Samnium following the Via Valeria, arrived by way of Tibur to the Anio bridge, crossed it and installed his camp on the left bank, seven kilometers from Rome. In truth, as he didn't have siege engines available, Rome wasn't in any danger. Hannibal's objective was to cause the Romans to panic. He hoped that the threat would force them to break the siege on Capua, and march back on Rome to defend it. Hannibal devastated fields around the city to feint a siege of Rome, and he positioned himself in front of the Colline Gate, located in the most vulnerable part of the enclosure. However, the Roman generals didn't make a move towards Rome, neither did they break off their siege of Capua, except for one division that followed Hannibal.

His feint having failed, Hannibal took to the road again to go back to Capua.

The Romans viewed his sudden departure as a miracle. Piously grateful, they raised an altar¹²⁴ to the gods protecting the city, whom they believed to have chased away the enemy. For centuries, the Romans would scare their children into obedience by crying : «*Hannibal ad portas*» !

On his way back to Capua, Hannibal was warned about a move of the troops of Consul Publius Galba, who had left Rome without taking precautions. The Carthaginian attacked and defeated him, then did away with his camp. This «battle of Rome» has sunk into oblivion, because of Capua's capitulation.

Capua's capitulation, Roman ferocity

For a long time already citizens of the Campanian capital, particularly those of high classes, had perceived a foreboding of an unavoidably sad future. Men from the Popular Party, hostile to Rome, dominated the Senate. Despair assailed the entire population. Twenty-eight senators committed suicide, others opened the city gates to a merciless enemy. Immediately, a bloody tribunal was established where only guilty verdicts were pronounced.

Fifty-three officers or Capuan magistrates were dragged to the public squares of Cales and Teanum, and were whipped and decapitated by order of, and under the eyes of Consul Quintus Flaccus. Other senators were thrown into prison, a major part of inhabitants were enslaved, and goods belonging to the rich were confiscated. Similar sentences were executed against the people of Atella and Calatia.

With great thirst for revenge, Rome seized the opportunity of crushing her antagonist, the economic capital of Italy : she annulled the constitution of the Campanian cities thus eliminating a political rival, long envied and hated.

Aftermath of the fall of Capua

The fall of Capua was a severe blow. With the idea of compensating for this disastrous loss in the minds of his allies, Hannibal vainly attempted to seize Rhegium or the citadel of Tarentum. A raid directed against Rhegium proved useless.

At the citadel of Tarentum, the Carthaginian squadron sealed off the port and

the Romans lacked for victuals. However, at high sea, the Roman fleet in turn blocked all arrivals. Hannibal could barely find enough provisions to feed his troops on a field he dominated. The besiegers on the side of the sea thus suffered just as much as the besieged inside the acropolis.

The esteem and confidence that Hannibal inspired in his allies were deeply shaken by the fall of Capua. Cities that had not compromised themselves by pledging allegiance to him, now tried to join the alliance with Rome against Carthage, under the best conditions possible. Had he taken the risk of sending garrisons to the uncommitted and doubting cities, Hannibal would have further weakened his already depleted army, and would have exposed his best soldiers to betrayal or annihilation¹²⁵. By capturing Capua, the Romans had given a very hard blow to the Hannibalic strategy of dislocation of the Confederation.

Marcellus left pacified Sicily, took command of the principal army and roamed around throughout the hinterland, attacking cities and waging combats against the Carthaginians, without any decisive results. Fighting was still taking place around the acropolis of Tarentum, without any notable consequences.

The second battle of Herdonia

In Apulia, Proconsul Fulvius Centumalus believed that he could recapture Herdonia. He established a weakly fortified camp in a rather precarious position. Hannibal had word of this and marched upon him, approaching in battle line for attack. The Roman who could in no way avoid combat, hastily brought out his troops. This was the second battle of Herdonia. One of the two legions engaged for combat along infantry lines, in spite of heavy losses, succeeded in resisting. But Hannibal had given his cavalry the order to make a turning motion, to take the Roman camp by the rear, then to attack. When the noise of a cavalry charge was heard behind them, together with the clamor of Carthaginians in their own camp, the Romans turned around and tried to resist.

The second legion was routed by the Numidians, who then charged survivors from the first legion and even combatants in the first ranks. Some Romans fled, others were massacred, among them Fulvius and eleven military tribunes. The Carthaginians seized the camp and the booty. About 30,000 Romans died on the battlefield. As for the few surviving Romans, they rallied Consul Marcellus in Samnium.

Rome rallied the Greeks against Macedonia

With the capture of Tarentum in 212, Hannibal had won an excellent port on the coast, an ideal landing location for a Macedonian army. The Romans perceiving the danger, decided to create a diversion to contain the Macedonian threat by detaining them in their land, to prevent them from landing in Italy. Nationalist Greek fervor had died down long ago. With the help of the traditional, but still vigorous opposition against Macedonia, skillfully building upon Philip's errors, Roman Admiral Laevinus mustered against him a coalition of small and middle-sized states, under the protection of Rome.

Though stronger than each one of his adversaries taken separately, Philip exhausted himself in agonizing defensive actions. Paralyzed in his movements, he asked King Prusias of Bithynia, and Hannibal himself to send him vessels. Finally, he ordered the construction of a hundred ships, and whether or not this order was ever executed is unclear, in any case, Philip would never use them. Greece thus exhausted its last resources in this unfortunate war, that would end in complete ruin.

13 - In Spain

In Spain, in the course of Hasdrubal's absence¹²⁶ the Scipios had their hands free to ransom Carthage's old allies and to call upon them to rebel. Upon Hasdrubal's return (211), they enlisted 20,000 Celtiberians. Then, to confront the three Carthaginian armies commanded by Hasdrubal Barca, Hasdrubal Gisco and Mago Barca, they also divided their troops into three corps, in which they allotted all Roman soldiers available by thirds.

Gnaeus Scipio camped opposite to Hasdrubal Barca with his core of Romans and all the Iberians, however, Hasdrubal succeeded in persuading the latter to abandon the Roman army. This development led the Roman general to withdraw as fast as possible, and the Carthaginians followed hard on his heels.

The second Roman corps under the orders of Publius Scipio was vigorously attacked by the two other African divisions, reinforced by Massinisa's light squadrons and commanded by Hasdrubal Gisco and Mago. The legionaries' camp was encircled, defeat was assured, unless the Iberian auxiliaries already on the march and expected, arrived in time. The proconsul attempted an audacious exit together with his best soldiers, to meet up with the expected reinforcements. The Romans succeeded with the breakthrough, but the Numidians charged them preventing retreat. The Carthaginian infantry arrived, Publius Scipio was vanquished and killed, his army was destroyed. Soon after, Gnaeus Scipio making a slow retrograde march had trouble defending himself against the first Carthaginian corps, then was suddenly attacked by the reunited three divisions, and the Numidians blocked the road. Driven back onto a bare hill, where there wasn't even room to camp, his army was cut to pieces. Gnaeus Scipio in person disappeared during combat, but a small troop led by an officer called Gaius Marcius, managed to escape. This troop succeeded in crossing the Ebro and joined Lieutenant Titus Fronteius, who had been able to take soldiers left at his camp by Publius Scipio to a safe place. Shortly, the major part of Roman garrisons dispersed in interior cities who had been able to withdraw, converged back to them.

SPAIN, LOST TO THE ROMANS

The Carthaginians reoccupied Spain up to the Ebro. They were about to cross the river and re-establish communications with Italy through the Pyrenees' passages, which had finally been cleared.

Leaving out old officers, the Roman soldiers elected Gaius Marcius as their chief. He took in hand the direction of operations and succeeded in confining the three Carthaginian chiefs to the south bank of the river. The demarcation line was fully shielded until the moment in which a fresh army with another general arrived from Italy. The war in Italy had at that time evolved into attacks on

civilians and refusal of military combat. Capua had just been recaptured, and Rome sent another legion to Spain under the orders of Propraetor Claudius Nero.

NERO IN SPAIN

The following year (210), a raid was successfully launched against Andalusia. Hasdrubal Barca was surrounded and borne down upon, however he managed to maneuver his army and extricated it, keeping it whole and unharmed. This was in fact his main objective, as he was ready to conduct a grand march towards Italy, as soon as his brother would order him to.

This defeat induced the Roman Senate to dismiss Nero. Having heard that Hasdrubal was carrying out huge preparations to lead a numerous army beyond the Pyrenees, the Senate determined to also send new reinforcements across the Ebro, as well as a new general-in-chief endowed with extraordinary powers.

PUBLIUS SCIPIO

Son of the general with the same name who had recently died in Spain, Publius Scipio was twenty-seven years old. All eyes turned to this young officer, who had miraculously survived the massacres of the Ticinus and Cannae. In reality, Scipio had never proved himself on the battlefield, but he was particularly gifted for the dissemination of propaganda. Not having progressed through all the hierarchical ranks, he could not officially succeed praetors and consuls. Resorting to the expedients of the single candidacy and the vote of the people, he was propelled to commandment.

Indubitably impressed by this son's eagerness to cross the seas to avenge his father's death, father whose life he had saved nine years earlier at the Ticinus, citizens of towns and rural areas gathered in the comitia and all voted for him.

Publius Scipio thus left for Spain (210-209), along with Propraetor Marcus Silanus, who would replace Nero and assist the young officer. He was also accompanied by Gaius Laelius, his lover and commander of the Roman fleet. He landed with a reinforced legion (more than 18,000 men) and overflowing coffers.

CAPTURE OF CARTAGENA

His beginnings were immediately marked by a stroke of luck. The three Carthaginian armies were stationed far from each other. Hasdrubal Barca watched over the heights, at the source of the river Tagus ; Hasdrubal Gisco was positioned at its estuary, and Mago was camping at the Pillars of Hercules. The closest among them from Cartagena was within a ten-day march range. In the first few days of spring 209, before any of the Carthaginian corps had made any move, Scipio swiftly swooped on Cartagena, following the coast from the mouths of the Ebro.

He was escorted by two reinforced legions, thus around 36,000 men and the entire fleet : he took by surprise both by sea and on land the weak garrison of a thousand men, left by the Carthaginians to watch over the town. The citadel, placed on a narrow tongue projecting into the bay, was surrounded on three sides by the ships, while the legions threatened it on its fourth side. Not having enough

soldiers to defend the ramparts, the commander, also called Mago, armed the citizens. They attempted an exit that the Romans effortlessly fended off. Neglecting to take the time for a regular siege, the Romans stormed inland and charged on the narrow passage linking the town to the continent. Scipio replaced columns that were worn out with fresh troops. In the mean time, the small defensive garrison was exhausting itself, but still heroically resisting. Resorting to ruse, the Roman then attempted to breach the sea ramparts, sparsely guarded owing to the weakness of the garrison. In fact, Scipio had learned that when the tide began to ebb, part of the shore remained bare. This location was where he planned his decisive attack. Taking advantage of the hectic tumult of the fighting at the other end of the town, a detachment equipped with scaling ladders launched itself on the sands and stormed the unguarded walls. The town was subjugated in a single day. Entrenched in the citadel, Mago capitulated. With the capture of Cartagena, the Romans seized 18 quinqueremes, 63 cargo ships, all war equipment, supplies in grain, military funds and imprisoned 10,000 men, among which 18 magistrates. Scipio used the equipment stored in Cartagena for the benefit of his army, which he reinforced and developed to the utmost.

Promising them their freedom at the end of the war, he put to work two thousand laborers found in the town and chose among inhabitants men suitable for rowing service. He spared the citizens, allowing them to remain free and retain their advantages. He thus secured possession of that unique port on the oriental coast, as well as the rich silver mines in the surroundings.

Hasdrubal Barca could have benefited from Scipio's absence to destroy the weak detachment left on the Ebro, but the Roman had already returned to the river before Hasdrubal made an appearance there.

Thanks to the capture of Cartagena, Scipio was maintained indefinitely in his command. During the winter (209-208), Scipio disbanded the fleet, added its men to his army and launched an incursion into Andalusia (208). He found Hasdrubal Barca there, heading towards the north to implement the long concerted plan : his march on Italy to rejoin Hannibal.

14 - Last Endeavors 209 - 205

While Marcellus was keeping Hannibal engaged, Consul Quintus Fulvius brought the long vacillating Lucanians and Hirpini under the Roman banner.

Raids by soldiers from Rhegium, compelled Hannibal to rush to the rescue of the Bruttians. In the absence of the Carthaginian, Fabius, who had set himself the task of recapturing Tarentum, settled himself firmly on the territory of the Messapians. Shortly, the treachery of a corps of Bruttians belonging to the garrison, caused the town to be handed over to him. As in prior circumstances, Rome proved to be cruel and barbaric. All those who fell into her hands, soldiers or citizens were put to the sword. Houses were looted, thirty thousand Tarentines

were sold as slaves, and three thousand talents¹²⁷ were stolen to enrich Rome's treasury. When Hannibal arrived to succor them, it was too late and he had to retreat to Metapontum.

Having lost his most important conquests by attacks exclusively taking place in his absence, Hannibal, greatly distressed, moved deeper towards the southern extremity of the Peninsula.

Marcellus, consul designate for the following year (208), nurtured the hope of ending the war at a stroke, with one forceful and decisive attack concerted with his colleague, Titus Quinctius Crispinus. His persistent obsession had indeed been to beat the Carthaginian and deliver Italy. The armies of the two consuls were joined, when Marcellus decided to reconnoiter a hill located between the Roman and Carthaginian camps. He was not aware that on the previous night, Hannibal had deployed 3,000 cavalrymen there ready for ambush.

While the two consuls were reconnoitering, they were attacked by Hannibal's cavalry. Wounded to death, Marcellus was thrown from his horse. Crispinus succeeded in fleeing, but soon after also died of his injuries (208).

Hannibal used the dead consul's seal to initial a letter asking the authorities of Salapia to open the city gates to the consul, but news of his death had already reached them, preventing the success of this ruse.

Hannibal then headed to Locri, attacked by Lucius Cincius Alimentus¹²⁸ with siege engines and projectile machines of all kinds, brought from Sicily. Learning that Hannibal in person was on his way, the Romans experienced such fear that they fled towards the sea, embarked on their vessels, leaving all their siege equipment behind.

Misery caused by war

Finances were in a catastrophic state. After the Battle of Cannae, Rome had instituted a treasury committee (banker triumvirs¹²⁹), composed of notable figures having wide competence in matters of public finances. However, the times and circumstances were so difficult that they thwarted all predictions of financial experts.

From the beginning of the war, Rome had restricted minting of silver and bronze coins, raised by more than a third the legal tender of the silver coin, and endowed the gold coin with a fictitious value, superior to its worth in metal. These poor expedients having been inadequate, supplies were bought on credit, and a blind eye was turned to all suppliers' misdeeds, as they were crucially required. However, corruption became so widespread, that the most cunning frauds had to be brought before the people's court. Rich men's patriotism was appealed to and in a spontaneous move, soldiers belonging to high classes, junior officers and knights refused their wages. Owners of slaves armed by the Republic, accepted to defer their claim until the end of the war. As there were no funds available for celebrations and the maintenance of public edifices, associations provided private means. In the same way as in the course of the First Punic War,

a fleet was constructed and armed by means of a voluntary loan, subscribed to by the rich (210). Pupillary denarii were seized, and in the very year of the recapture of Tarentum, the treasury's long-saved last reserves were all used up. In spite of all these measures, a lack of currency persisted. Soldiers' wages were disturbingly suspended, particularly for those from the most distant countries. However, financial pressures were not the worst ill. Everywhere fields lay fallow, prices were soaring, and were it not for the wheat offered by Egypt, as well as the reviving agriculture in Sicily, famine would have raged.

Rebellion of Latins, revolt of allies

In addition to the Romans' material sufferings, they were plagued by their allies' disgust with the war. In truth, Rome was not really concerned by the Latins' unwillingness to fight, for as long as they remained loyal to Rome, nothing could be feared from their discontent. However, the state of affairs was deteriorating.

Most of the Latin cities of Etruria, Latium, the Marsian country, northern Campania and even Italic regions spared by war, informed the Roman Senate (209) that thenceforth they would send neither contingents nor contributions, and would let Rome fend for herself in these protracted combats. Rome was astounded by this stand, and wondered how to compel the recalcitrant cities to toe the line? Thankfully for Rome, not all the Latin cities shared this defiance. The colonies of Gaul, Picenum and lower Italy, the powerful and patriotic Fregellae at their head, reaffirmed their unfailing loyalty, as their very existence in the midst of conquered territory was even more at risk than that of the metropolis.

What was at stake in this war was not Rome's survival, but Latin hegemony in Italy and even more so, the threat of national independence for Italic people. A schism had taken place between Latins and Romans, the backlash of which was immediately perceived by the populations of the colonized cities. Arretium experienced a dangerous uprising; revolt spread to the Etruscans, who wanted to rally Hannibal. The damage was so widespread that Rome had to crack down. Though militarily stifling the rebellion, Rome realized how grave a threat it represented. If the populations were no longer held at bay by Latin fortresses, anything could be feared from them.

Hasdrubal joined Hannibal in Italy

Hannibal finally gave his brother the order to join him in Italy. Hasdrubal's priority was to lead a complete and unharmed army there. This requirement led him to circumvent Scipio, rather than confront him, weaving a circuitous way towards the northern coasts of Spain. Scipio boasted of a «victory» against Hasdrubal at Baecula. Did a battle really take place? Why didn't Scipio, whose main mission it was to prevent the departure of Carthaginian reinforcements towards Italy, take advantage of this so-called victory to annihilate this army?

intended to rejoin Hannibal ? Furthermore, it is hard to envision Hasdrubal launching his grand march towards Italy, after having suffered a military defeat.

Following the Atlantic coast, Hasdrubal crossed the western Pyrenees and wintered in Gaul.

Scipio's failure to prevent Hasdrubal and his army from leaving Spain was particularly momentous for the Romans, as due to this fault the summer of 207 would probably see the concretization of the double attack, long-anticipated by Hannibal and dreaded by Rome. However, a skillful propaganda feat covered up Scipio's failure. Rome, who had praised him to the skies after his unquestionably lucky capture of Cartagena, balked at punishing the long-awaited «hero» and agreed to relay his propaganda, which consisted in describing Hasdrubal's bypassing of Scipio's army as a rout of the Carthaginian. The news of the very questionable defeat at Baecula, was received in Rome as that of a victorious battle. Due to following events and Hasdrubal's future failure, the Romans would forget that Scipio had allowed the skillful Hasdrubal and his army to slip through his fingers.

Hasdrubal's arrival

The Romans were stunned and dismayed to learn that Hasdrubal was on his way to Italy, and that they would have to confront both of Hamilcar's sons at the same time.

Hannibal was finally expecting the reinforcements that he had waited for during eleven years. The army that Carthage and Philip had been incapable of sending him would be brought by his brother.

Eight thousand Ligurians were ready to join Hasdrubal. Besides, if he triumphed in a first combat, he could also expect support from the Gauls and Etruscans.

Italy was no longer the power it had been eleven years ago : the territories had been bled dry and were ruined, the population was exhausted. The Latin League was partly disbanded, and the best Roman soldiers and officers had perished on the battlefield. Hannibal still remained invincible.

Confronted with this extreme peril, Rome strengthened forces to 23 legions¹³⁰, called upon volunteers, even on soldiers who had been legally freed from service.

Hasdrubal and Hannibal's marches

Hasdrubal crossed the Alps in 207. Thenceforth accustomed to the passing of armies, the Gauls made accessible the mountain defiles and furnished supplies against payment. The news spread that Hasdrubal was in the plains of the Po and following his brother's example, had encouraged the Gauls' insurgency. Placentia was surrounded.

Consul Marcus Livius hastily joined the army of the north. Etruria and Umbria mutinied and conceded volunteers to Hasdrubal's army. The other consul, Gaius Nero and his four legions, quickly attempted to bar the road to the north to Hannibal. The latter had in fact gathered all his forces in Bruttium, then had

marched on the major route from Rhegium towards Apulia and met Nero at Grumentum. Nero had no choice, Rome's formal orders could not be defied. He was at all costs to prevent the two brothers from merging their armies, as Rome knew she could never overcome them both and prevail. Nero tried to block the route, but Hannibal whose objective it was to join his brother as fast as possible, skillfully bypassed him with one of those rapid flank marches to which he was accustomed and entered Apulia¹³¹. He stopped there and first camped near Venusia, then in Canusium. Nero followed him step by step and always camped across from him. Hannibal was perfectly acquainted with the field, the supply issues and the position of enemy armies ; he was waiting for a signal from Hasdrubal. Nothing is known of the correspondence between the two brothers, nor about their respective plans. Nero's legions closely watched Hannibal's army, and while the two armies were observing one another, motionless, a dispatch from Hasdrubal was intercepted by Roman outposts. It revealed that Hasdrubal was to follow the Flaminian Way : he would march along the coastline up until Fanum, to descend the Apennine on Narnia, where he hoped to meet his brother.

Nero immediately directed all of Rome's reserves¹³² towards the location designed for the junction of the two Carthaginian armies. Convinced that Hannibal was not aware of his brother's plan, Nero boldly conceived the idea of leading his army on a forced march towards the north, to reunite his forces with those of his colleague, then compel Hasdrubal to do battle.

Battle of Metaurus

Nero encountered his colleague at Sena Gallica. They immediately marched against Hasdrubal. The 22nd of June 207, Hasdrubal wanted to cross the Metaurus, he wanted to avoid battle in order to bring his brother an intact army. He attempted to duck out on the Romans' flank, but his guides betrayed and abandoned him, leaving him confused and lost in a region he was unfamiliar with. The Roman cavalry caught up with him and compelled him to hold his own, while expecting the arrival of the infantry. Battle became unavoidable.

Hasdrubal deployed his Iberians on the right wing, with his elephants in front of them. He deployed the Gauls on his left, slightly withdrawn.

In spite of the huge imbalance in forces, the combat long remained inconclusive. Commanded by Consul Livius, the Romans withdrew rapidly under the pressure exerted by the Carthaginian army. Then, Nero accomplished a strategic move on the field. Leaving the Carthaginian army lines in front of him, he led the right Roman wing to the rear of the whole army, then swung his troops around and brought them crashing into the Carthaginian right flank, composed of Iberians. Victory was hotly contested. Forced to fall back, deprived from any exit, the Carthaginian army was destroyed and their camp was stormed. Hasdrubal refused to flee as his officers advised him to, combating alongside his men, fiercely fighting hand-to-hand, until he valiantly perished on the battlefield.

Nero departed the next day and he returned to his station in Apulia, after

fourteen days of absence. Hannibal hadn't moved, he knew nothing about the disaster that had overcome his brother. Nero had his brother's head thrown at his outposts, responding in a barbarous manner to the nobility of Hannibal, who despising baseness and ignominy had paid full funeral honors to Roman dignitaries who had fallen on the battlefield.

Hannibal in Bruttium

Hasdrubal's death amounted to the crushing of all Hannibal's hopes. No description has survived of the Carthaginian's pain at the dreadful news, however the moves he made when he learned of it betray the depth of his despondency. Abandoning Apulia, Lucania and even Metapontum, he sought refuge in Bruttium.

For the Romans, luck yet again had warded off the greatest danger of the war. Euphoria was boundless in Rome. Matters took their natural course again as in time of peace. Everyone felt as if the hour of crisis had passed.

Hannibal stationed himself in Croton during the last three years of his campaign in Italy. This ancient city which had reaped the benefit of four centuries of Greek culture, was particularly beautiful and refined.

This was where Hannibal spent the summer of 205, more precisely in the temple erected to Hera at Promunturium Lacinium¹³³. This site was surrounded by a sacred woodland, where grazed the cattle that represented the temple's wealth. Hannibal had a small heifer crafted, which he placed at the top of the solid gold column of the temple. He also had engraved on a bronze tablet a bilingual inscription, in Greek and in Punic that related the facts of his victories. From this no longer extant inscription that he examined, Polybius reported only on the numerical data of the forces taken by Hannibal to Italy.

Standstill in the war

Exhausted by the efforts and expenditure in moral and material energy that she had put into the war, Rome slackened off to repose and safety. Army and navy forces were reduced, peasants returned to their deserted fields, the Roman treasury filled its coffers thanks to the sale of Campanian domains and public administration was reformed.

During this time, Hannibal was still in Italy, he occupied the south of the Peninsula for three more years. In spite of their crushing numerical superiority, his adversaries could neither constrain him to confine himself in a stronghold, nor to take to the seas.

Livy, who was not by any means a supporter of Hannibal's, could not help himself from expressing his admiration for him. He pointed out that during all of Hannibal's years of war in Italy with a motley, heterogeneous army for whom supplies and wages arrived sporadically, the Carthaginian had never experienced any sedition, so great was his pre-eminence on his men and so powerful the bond

that he had created between them and himself.

Spain abandoned by the Carthaginians

Once Hasdrubal Barca had left, the two chiefs of the Carthaginian army left behind in the Peninsula, opted for a strategic withdrawal. Hasdrubal Gisco returned to the south to bar the Strait. Mago repaired to the Balearic Islands to prepare for a new expedition to Italy. Both were expecting reinforcements from Carthage. As for Masinissa, his mission was to stir up the Iberians against Rome, who occupied the east coast. The following year (207), Hanno having lost a third army, Mago and Hasdrubal Gisco returned to Andalusia. Marcus Silanus defeated Mago and Hanno united together and imprisoned the latter. Hasdrubal Gisco with an inferior number of troops to those of the enemy, dispersed his soldiers in the towns of Andalusia. The Carthaginians seemed exhausted, but in 206, they returned with a small army of 32 elephants, 4,000 cavalry and 7,000 foot soldiers consisting of Iberian militiamen gathered in haste. The collision took place at Baecula. The Roman army far more numerous, also counted a great number of Iberians. Scipio deployed his Iberians in a situation which spared them from combat, which was the only way to stop them from deserting, and first hurled his Romans at the Iberians of the enemy army. The day was fiercely combated, the Carthaginian-Iberians fought heroically, but the Romans got the better of them and the Carthaginian generals, Hasdrubal Gisco and Mago, retreated towards Gades. Nevertheless, the Iberian cities valiantly resisted occupation, and those that were defeated were cruelly castigated.

Scipio took advantage of the Carthaginians' military disorganisation and sailed to Africa to meet with Syphax in his lands, to commit to an alliance with him for a future expedition to Africa. Strangely at Syphax's court, (we will discuss this development more at length further on) Scipio met with Hasdrubal Gisco, supposedly his worst enemy, who was on his way back to Carthage.

After this puzzling meeting, the Roman hastily returned to Spain where he was needed because of the ongoing war.

While Gades protected by Mago was still in the hands of the Carthaginians, the Romans displaced and ousted them practically everywhere else. Nonetheless, in many localities the Iberians resisted and the threat of a general insurrection began to loom. Those who mutinied first were specifically Rome's former allies, revolt even sparked in the midst of Scipio's troops : a division of his army rebelled because they were angered by several years of arrears in payment of wages. Scipio succeeded in calming his soldiers, he would pay them by mercilessly crushing and ransoming the cities that had given the signal for the general uprising.

As soon as Mago left, Gades the most ancient and pre-eminent Phoenician colony, opened its gates to its new masters, under unusually favorable conditions. After thirteen years of war, Spain ceased to belong to the Carthaginians and became a Roman province. For centuries to come, Spain would continue to

struggle against the Roman yoke, it would always be defeated but never subjugated.

Mago in Italy

Hannibal had called Mago to the rescue. The latter gathered vessels, coins and soldiers and embarked towards the Balearic Islands¹³⁴. He crossed the distance between Minorca and Genoa without making any stopovers, to bring his brother decisive support in northern Italy. Scipio did not succeed in preventing his departure. For the second time, he had failed in his mission of defending Rome against invasion. Conscious of the threat to his reputation, he consigned his command and went to Rome in person to report on his victories and conquests, which were essentially attributable to the departure of Carthaginian forces to Italy and not to own prowess.

Mago landed in Italy in 205 and occupied Genoa. He called the Ligurians and Gauls to arms, and they swarmed in crowds to answer his summon. He had contacts in all of Etruria where political executions never ceased. Alarmed once more, fearing a successful merging of Carthaginian forces on its soil, Rome dispatched legions to the north.

The Carthaginian government subjected to very powerful political pressure finally sent Hannibal subsidies and reinforcements (206-205). Several senators, probably Reformers from Hannibal's faction, left for Macedonia to ask Philip to renew the alliance and to land with forces on the enemy's coasts (205). But these were only vain and tardy efforts.

Peace between Philip and the Greeks

The trading towns - Rhodes, Chios, Mytilene, Byzantium, Athens - and Egypt attempted to effect a rapprochement between the belligerents, who were by that time willing to negotiate a peace. The Aetolians had grasped the adverse effects of the Roman alliance and ended by agreeing with the Greeks on the necessity of making peace with Philip, in spite of Rome's refusal, during the winter of 206 to 205.

Peace between Philip and Rome

Rome had to chose between redeploying her forces or making peace with Philip. In view of the dire state of internal affairs, it appeared more advantageous to sign a peace. Pursuant to the arrangement concluded, they reverted to the pre-war situation : Rome held on to practically all her possessions on the coast of Epirus. Thus, all the indescribable miseries endured by Greece during a ten-year fratricide war, had been pointless.

Hannibal's grand designs and ingenious schemes were henceforth null and void. Greece would not help him.

15 - Scipio in Africa

With this third invasion, Mago's invasion, Rome humiliated, exhausted and ruined had to combat again, but she no longer had enough men capable of taking up such a challenge. The best captains had either fallen on the battlefield or were too old, like Fabius and Fulvius. Gaius Nero and Marcus Livius both aristocrats, the vanquishers of Hasdrubal, did not have the required stature to convince the bone-weary people to make further endeavors.

At that time, Scipio, cherished by the people and grandstander due to his conquests, but especially because of his consummate gift for propaganda, returned from Spain. He was immediately designated as consul for the following year. He took over the office (205) with the resolute intention of leading an army to Africa. The majority of senators supported methodical warfare and did not want to hear of an expedition to Africa, as long as Hannibal and Mago were in Italy. Moreover, the harsh and dour senators viewed negatively his open homosexuality, his habits of all-Greek elegance as well as his overly modern mindset. Scipio was also greatly criticized for the strategic faults he had committed during his command in Spain, and for his soft discipline of troops. He was reproached for his indulgence towards his officers, Pleminus at their head, guilty of dreadful atrocities in Locri with his blessing.

In the Senate every time his own interest was at stake, Scipio ignored customs and rules and threatened to call upon the people's support, against the authorities in power. However, Scipio did not benefit from this privileged position uniquely because of the people's goodwill. In point of fact, he was the only one to submit a reliable program to expedite Hannibal's end. This plan did not limit itself to a military campaign in Africa, its essential component was secret, as Scipio knew that Hannibal had spies even within the Senate itself. He only disclosed it to a few senators. The latter convinced of his stratagem's merits would support him to concretize it.

Scipio authorized to travel to africa, but using his own resources

Confronted to a majority that considered that Hannibal's invincibility and the uprising in the north were the only real priorities, the Senate found a compromise : Scipio would be authorized to lead his campaign in Africa, but without resorting to Italian defense forces and without funds from the State. He was allowed to go to Sicily and supervise construction work on a fleet, which would enable him to land an expeditionary force in Africa the following spring. He could recruit volunteers in Italy, but he would have to cope with finding funds. The soldiers that Scipio planned on recruiting had been cantoned in Sicily for many years, as a punitive measure, and were characterized by a marked reluctance to fight. Nevertheless, Scipio accepted all conditions as long as he could obtain the long-desired command, because as we will see, the quality of troops and their training were not fundamental elements for the success of his strategy.

Main expenses, especially those for the fleet, were paid by means of a war contribution imposed upon cities guilty of defection, who had fallen back under Roman yoke. In forty days, the vessels were ready. The army corps was reinforced by 7,000 volunteers. Finally, during the spring of 204, Scipio left with two strong legions¹³⁵, 40 warships, 400 transport ships and without encountering a shadow of resistance, landed near Castra Delia¹³⁶.

Carthage mobilized

In the course of the last few years, incursions and raids had often been carried out by Roman squadrons on the African coast. To defend themselves the Carthaginians had without success attempted to reignite the Italic-Macedonian war. Then they had decided to detach the most powerful of Numidian kings Syphax, from his old alliance with Rome. They had negotiated with him and as a reward for switching his alliance to Carthage, he had been allowed to marry a Carthaginian noblewoman, Sophonisba¹³⁷.

In addition to the reinforcements promised by Syphax, the Carthaginians possessed a small army of foot soldiers and a few thousand horses. These forces hastily mustered were deployed all over the town. A general from the old army of Spain, Hasdrubal Gisco – the very one who had met Scipio in Syphax' lands – commanded them. A fleet was deployed in the port.

At the news of Scipio's landing, whom he had fought on behalf of the Carthaginians in Spain, Masinissa, son of the Numidian king Gaia, who had been dethroned by Syphax, rushed to his camp. But as this landless Prince brought with him only his personal talents and a few cavalrymen, the Roman scorned him and initiated his march. As long as he had before him only the Carthaginian army, numerically weaker than his own, he maintained the advantage. After a few cavalry fights, he besieged Utica. However, Syphax soon appeared at the head of a Numidian army. Scipio lifted the siege and took refuge for the winter in a naval camp constructed on an easily defensible promontory¹³⁸, between Utica and Carthage. This was where the Romans spent the winter (204-203). In spring, Scipio took the initiative of organizing peace negotiations with Syphax. In reality, it was merely a ruse intended to dull the Carthaginians' alertness.

Scipio's victories

His spies reported that the camps of Carthaginian troops consisted in cabins of wood branches and twigs, while the Numidians rested in huts made of reeds and foliage. He decided on a surprise attack. At night, the Numidian huts were torched and when the Carthaginians flew to their rescue, their cabins were also set ablaze and consumed by fire. Fleeing without weapons, the soldiers were assailed by ambushed Roman detachments. They were taken completely by surprise and the armies were decimated. Bound to broach the subject of a massacre operated by his master's ancestor indulgently, Polybius did not hesitate to glorify the carnage : «*Of all the war actions undertaken by Scipio, this one was the most beautiful and the boldest.*»¹³⁹ This statement not only seems out of place to qualify treachery followed by a bloodbath, but is also extremely perplexing with

regards to Zama. Indeed, if such an inglorious act was dubbed «*the most beautiful and the boldest*» of Scipio's war actions, then what about Zama ?

Some Carthaginians wanted Mago and Hannibal to be recalled, but this summoning back was rejected by a greater number, a disconcerting fact as everyone knew that Hannibal had nothing more to do in Italy. So what was the reason for rejecting this summon? Did Hanno's faction want the Barcids to continue to engage forces in Rome? And if so, for what purpose? Or did they dread Hannibal's return, followed by his probable victory over Scipio? We will see further along that this thesis that Hannibal himself would adduce, is by far the most tenable.

Hasdrubal and Syphax succeeded in reconstituting their forces and gathered 30,000 men. They wanted to fight a pitched battle in the «great plains»¹⁴⁰, five days march from Utica. Scipio met the challenge with alacrity, and his legions scattered the disordered Numidian-Carthaginian forces.

Hasdrubal and Syphax retreated. The latter went to muster new troops and launched them against the forces of Laelius and Masinissa, occupying the territory of Cirta. Syphax failed in his offensive, was made prisoner and handed over to Scipio's companion. In light of their king's capture, the inhabitants of Cirta opened their town's gates to Masinissa. He found Sophonisba there and she beseeched him to put her to death, rather than allow her to fall into the hands of the Romans. Captivated by the legendary beauty, the refinement, the intelligence, the patriotism and the spirit of sacrifice of the Carthaginian noblewoman, Masinissa proposed to her, convincing her that marriage to him would save her from capture. Their wedding was celebrated unbeknownst to Laelius. When the latter learned about the marriage, he immediately informed Scipio, who had just heard from his prisoner Syphax that he had only taken arms against Rome, because he had been seduced into doing so by the beguiling Sophonisba. Fearing a reversal of his alliance with Sophonisba's new spouse, Masinissa, Scipio warned him that her life belonged to Rome. To avoid her being taken into bondage, Masinissa then gave his young, brave new wife the liberating poison.

Carthage and Scipio then negotiated a peace. The two factions agreed upon the following clauses :

Peace negotiations

- handing over prisoners, deserters and fugitive slaves
- withdrawing troops from south Italy and the Valley of the Po
- renouncing all Iberian possessions, as well as the islands located between Italy and Africa
- handing over warships, allowing only twenty to remain in Carthage
- paying 5,000 talents¹⁴¹ in war reparations
- providing the Roman army with grain.

Clauses to which must of course be added the quid pro quo : the cessation of hostilities and the departure of Scipio's army back to Italy.

Carthage's plenipotentiaries agreed to the clauses subject to their necessary ratification by the government. The Senate and the Roman people ratified the

treaty.

So far, Scipio's plan had perfectly worked : he had succeeded in cornering Carthage and forcing her to sign a peace treaty, and Mago and Hannibal had to leave Italy.

Mago, who had been struggling in the north of Italy for the past three years (205-203) to resuscitate the coalition against Rome, had just waged battle to a double Roman army, by far numerically superior to his own. He had forced the enemy cavalry to retreat and had closely constricted the infantry. We'd like to believe Polybius' colorful battle descriptions, however the historiographer made certain perplexing declarations : «*The skillful general thought victory was within grasp, when a Roman division boldly threw itself upon the elephants.*» Which elephants is he alluding to ? We know that Mago arrived in Italy by performing an unprecedented nautical feat, a direct crossing with no stopovers from Minorca to Genoa. But to infer that he transported elephants on his ships is a wild stretch of imagination. Furthermore, it is hard to envision Carthage sending him elephants as reinforcements by sea route, over a distance of 500 nautical miles bordering on enemy territory. It seems clear that we are, yet again, confronted with the practice of exaggeration used to excess by Polybius in his narrative of the war. Polybius, who should be read with a great degree of suspicion, added that Mago had been severely injured and that the remnants of his army were forced to retreat to the coast. Then, Mago, Hannibal's last and youngest brother, is said to have apparently died during the crossing, according to this dubious version of Polybius'. In reality, Mago simply received orders from Carthage to leave Italy. He accomplished an organized retreat and repatriated his men towards Carthage. Did he really die during the crossing ? Certain classical authors mentioned his presence alongside his brother at a far later date. The Ancients also spoke of a certain «Hamilcar» who had continued to wage war in the north of Italy, long after the peace treaty between Rome and Carthage had been signed...

16 - Hannibal in Africa

The envoy from Carthage came to Hannibal in Croton in the south of Italy, where he had created a state endowed with its own coinage and institutions. Hearing the dire news, Hannibal must have gloomily contemplated the final crushing of his dreams of victory : Carthage had not made the war effort crucial to ensuring ultimate triumph, the alliance with Philip had never been enacted and the last invasion carried out by his brother Mago, had been foiled by the peace treaty signed by the senators of Carthage. The latter had not only thwarted the prospect of his executing the long-awaited double offensive, but had also ruled out the opportunity for Hannibal of vanquishing Scipio on African soil.

The Barcids had spared no effort to ensure Carthage's final victory, while Carthage did everything in her power to prevent them from ultimately triumphing.

Even though Rome's doggedness in refusing to concede defeat and Fabius' delaying tactics were essential factors of Hannibal's besting, nevertheless, Carthage's policies had been the overriding and key determinants of his failure. Indeed, the hostility of the Carthaginian faction in power, had brought about countless missed opportunities and military disasters.

In his last entrenchment in the south of the Peninsula, the Carthaginian certainly pondered at length over the ultimate frustration of his adventure, perhaps he even mused over the fact that fortune had never favored his boldness.

Since that drastic early winter of 218-217 that had turned the crossing of the Alps into a tragically deadly enterprise, up to the envoys sent by Hasdrubal Barca that had never arrived, fate had dealt the Carthaginian a cruel hand : Rome's refusal to combat, the lack of courage and initiative of the liberated peoples (which had caused the losses of Capua, Syracuse and Tarentum), the tribulations of the Spanish war, the appalling behavior of the metropolis and innumerable other grim twists of fate had all contributed in sabotaging his victory.

And now the last straw : Carthage had signed an armistice with Scipio, without consulting the key player nor even summoning him back to defend her.

Hannibal had enough ships constructed to complement the transport fleet sent by Carthage, to convey his invincible army back to his homeland.

Upon his departure, Rome ratified the peace treaty and sent three emissaries to Africa, to inform Carthage of the end of the war.

Hannibal disembarked at Leptiminus

After a smooth crossing and though he was protected by the peace treaty, Hannibal disembarked in Leptiminus¹⁴², probably to avoid the hazards of a naval battle. His arrival on the coast also guaranteed him ample leeway to maneuver :

he was sufficiently far away from Scipio to avoid a surprise attack in the middle of landing. Furthermore, he had favored this distance from Carthage as she was still governed by the Hannonid dynasty. Hannibal viewed these old enemies of the Barcid dynasty as the real culprits for his defeat, as their treasonous acts, their cowardice, their jealousy and their multiple plots had effectively prevented the sending of the crucial reinforcements to Italy.

After thirty-six years of absence the last survivor of the Barcids trod the soil of the land of his birth, that he had left when he was still a child.

Resumption of hostilities ?

The peace treaty had been ratified, and Scipio should have already abided by the clause dealing with the repatriation of his men to Italy, when arose a strange affair : a Roman supply convoy had purportedly been caught in a storm. Among its two hundred ships, a number had allegedly been stranded on the western coast of the Cape of Mercury, near the «Hot Springs» of Carpis (Korbous.) Fifty Carthaginian ships had supposedly taken possession of them and tugged them towards Carthage. Outraged, Scipio was reported to have told the three Roman emissaries he had just received – who were there to inform the Carthaginians of the ratification by Rome of the peace treaty – to also demand reparation for the capture of the stranded vessels. On their return to Scipio's camp, the three emissaries had ostensibly been ambushed. The implausible configuration thereof, as well as the inarguable determination of the Carthaginian government at that time to commit to peace, lead us to greatly doubt the truthfulness and accuracy of this highly putative occurrence.

The Roman then hastened to lift his camp which was stationed under the walls of Tunis (202), progressed through the rich valley of the Bagradas¹⁴³ river, ostensibly looting towns and villages and operating a mass capture of inhabitants to sell as slaves¹⁴⁴.

He had already progressed very far into the interior of the land and stationed himself near Naraggara¹⁴⁵, when Hannibal coming from Hadrumetum reportedly joined him there.

Both Polybius and Livy spoke of a meeting between the two enemy generals, during which the Carthaginian allegedly attempted to negotiate a peace. The account of this encounter¹⁴⁶, in which Hannibal supposedly pleaded with Scipio for peace, is hardly credible and the interchanges between them are at complete odds with reality.

What reason could the invincible Hannibal possibly have for wanting to avoid a confrontation ? Did he feel more of a foreigner on the territory of his homeland Carthage, than he had in Italy ? Did he fear the hostility, the ineptitude and the versatility of the Carthaginian government, or, perhaps, the lack of allies ? It was true that the Numidians and Libyans were now Rome's allies, but Massinissa had never fought for Hannibal and he possessed his own cavalry. Hannibal could also count on his brother Mago's troops, that had occupied the north of Italy for three years. Furthermore, he could rely on other Numidian allies who were opposed to

Masinissa, as well as on the troops that Carthage would enlist. It seems very unlikely that Hannibal, who had not only stood up to forces ten times superior in numbers to his own on Rome's territory, but had literally terrorized them during sixteen years of war, should shy away from combat.

However, let us first stick to the narrative reported by the Ancients, before resuming our argument for another reading of the facts.

Zama¹⁴⁷ according to Polybius

Scipio thus purportedly refused Hannibal's pleas for peace, and a battle took place in a location called Zama¹⁴⁸.

Polybius described this battle in the following way. Hannibal ostensibly deployed his infantry in three lines : in the forefront stood the Carthaginian mercenaries ; in the second rank, the African militias and the citizens of Carthage ; in the third row, his veterans of the army of Italy. The cavalry was on the wings. Scipio also deployed his army in three divisions. The Roman cavalry, by far superior in numbers thanks to the auxiliary squadrons of Massinissa, supposedly charged the Carthaginian cavalry that immediately fled. Massinissa reportedly rushed to pursue it. At the center, the combat between the two first lines of the two enemy infantries long remained indecisive. After a bloody struggle, they both allegedly withdrew in confusion to look for support in the second lines. The Romans had no trouble finding it : but the Carthaginian militiamen purportedly proved to be unreliable, and the mercenaries believing themselves betrayed, came to blows with their fellow Carthaginians. Hannibal reportedly hastened to withdraw the remnants of these two divisions to the wings, in order to expedite the intervention of his reserves from the army of Italy : the only corps present in which he had absolute confidence, his «invincibles» who had supported him without fail during all those years. Combating in person among his men, Hannibal was said to have multiplied their energy tenfold. Scipio, throwing at the Carthaginian center all the remnants of his first line of combat, and bringing his two other divisions to his right and to his left, failed in his attempt at envelopment. The battle then by all accounts started again over the entire front, now greatly spread out.

There was said to have been a new clash and a horrible carnage ensued. In spite of the numbers of Romans, Hannibal's veterans avowedly stood firm, accustomed to hand-to-hand combat and they started to prevail over the Romans. The battle was evolving into a victory of the Carthaginian forces when Masinissa, who had abandoned his pursuit of runaways, came back and presumably attacked Hannibal's veterans from the rear. This was purportedly the turning point of the battle and so the story goes, the Carthaginian army was supposedly decimated. Finally, Carthage was forced to sign a new peace treaty, that of 201, that among other clauses imposed upon her the burning of her navy. She was reportedly only allowed ten «long» ships, prohibited from having an army and waging war, unless specifically authorized by Rome to do so.

Roman history : a creation of the Second Punic War.

Before embarking upon a new interpretation of facts we need to examine the following premise.

Before Hannibal's arrival in Italy, Rome's history was limited to the legend of its founding, to the annals and to a few religious scriptures or practical guides (calendar adjustments).

Before the Second Punic War there was no historiography in Rome. It was only with the Carthaginian invasion that a Roman historiography developed, devoted entirely to coming to grips with Hannibal's exceptional propaganda campaign and the chronicles of numerous pro-Carthaginian writers. Roman historiography was thus essentially an undertaking with a nationalistic aim, an act of propaganda ; in fact, it would never divest itself of these jingoistic and Romano-centrist traits, with very few exceptions. The only extant writings derive exclusively from these historiographers, among whom the Cornelii Scipiones¹⁴⁹, who wrote contemporary history emphasizing the role of their family, rival of the Fabii family. The rivalry between the great patrician families was exacerbated by the Punic wars, and was one of the chief factors behind the creation of a national history¹⁵⁰. It was this historiography that was Polybius' main source, as he wrote sixty years after the facts. He wrote after the destruction of Carthage of which he was one of the main architects, in view of the fact of his having been military adviser to Scipio Aemilianus, adoptive grandson of Scipio Africanus and Aemilius Paullus.

Large-scale censorship

This monolithism of sources was not only due to the hazards of time. It was also the result of an acknowledged and concerted determination. If vindictiveness, hate and fear for the renewal represented by Carthage caused genocide and destruction, what explains the obliteration of memory ? For what reason did Scipio Aemilianus order un auto-da-fé of books in one of the most scholarly cities of the era ? It was most probably Polybius himself who sorted out the books to be conserved from those to be destroyed, or to be abandoned to the «African prides» – the scientific books as was suggested by the famous anecdote about the books of Mago the agronomist–.

Among the books destroyed a great number dealt with the Second Punic War. In particular, two biographies of Hannibal, one written by Sosylos of Lacedaemon¹⁵¹ and the other by Silenus Calatinus. How could two biographies¹⁵² reporting the most fascinating events of Antiquity have disappeared from the surface of the globe ? The auto-da-fé does not explain this disappearance entirely, as these books circulated in all the Mediterranean region. Censorship was thus practiced on a very grand scale and during a long period of time. Scipio

Aemilianus and his servant Polybius were not the only protagonists of this censorship, Rome also was committed to it. Indeed, all testimonials of the facts by contemporary authors, even Roman ones such as Fabius Pictor¹⁵³, Cincius Alimentus¹⁵⁴ and Cato the Elder have also disappeared¹⁵⁵.

Of the writings of Coelius Antipater, who wrote about forty years after the Second Punic War and largely inspired himself from the writings of Sosylos, nothing survives. Of other historians who wrote in Greek, such as Xenophon and Eumachos of Naples, we know only the names as their writings were lost. Even accounts of «Hannibal's war», written by secondary Roman authors such as C. Acilius and L. Cassius Hermina, have vanished.

The writings of Polybius were to become the only source, they would come to represent a kind of sieve through which would be filtered all of Hannibal's story. Other scarce sources that survived Polybius would be subjected to a new filter, more than a century later : that of Livy's who, in the same way as Polybius for Scipio Aemilianus, would act on behalf of Augustus in his undertaking to rehabilitate Rome's greatness. Everything that has reached us since has principally ensued from these two authors.

Could chance be that selective ? Are we not rather, the victims of an operation of censorship on a very grand scale ?

Purpose of censorship

We know for a fact that for centuries, censorship of all facts concerning Hannibal reached a very high level. The post-livian writings are compelling in this regard. Accusations and insults hurled against Carthage and her men abound. We know that Roman emperor Domitian, went so far as to execute a senator for naming his slaves Hannibal and Mago¹⁵⁶.

These events took place two centuries and a half after Hannibal's death. This censorship¹⁵⁷, concerning a personage that Scipio allegedly crushed in a great battle, is really curious. Further, the occulting of a vanquished by the vanquisher, is totally absurd.

Which leads us to think that there was possibly something else, that Scipio Aemilianus wanted to eradicate : no, not another appreciation of facts, altogether commonplace in a relation between belligerants, but, rather, a version of the facts radically different from the one reported to us.

Break-up in the logic of the narrative

We know that Polybius concealed the political scope of Hannibal's epopee, minimized his victories and manipulated figures and facts, while optimizing the Romans' virtues and defending their point of view ; however, up to the departure of Scipio for Africa, the narrative of events that has reached us is plausible. Polybius could not occult Hannibal's genius, nor could he distort facts that the whole of Italy, be it only through testimonials relayed within families,

remembered all too well, or he would have been at risk of losing all credibility.

But when events move to Africa, it is clear that this narrative of distant facts often lacks reliability¹⁵⁸, especially in the absence of conflicting testimonies. Many works have ferreted out Polybius' disinformation, such as, for instance, his substitution of the commander-in-chief on the day of the Battle of Cannae. Through this fraudulent process, Polybius wanted to relieve Scipio Aemilianus' grandfather from responsibility for the greatest military catastrophe in the history of Rome, to shift the blame for it onto his colleague Varro. Polybius did not hesitate to use disinformation to the detriment of a Roman consul, Varro, for facts that took place in Italy. What would prevent him from misrepresenting facts which had unfolded far from all eyes, in Africa, and that could no longer be contested by anyone, Carthage having been wiped off the map.

A number of books rooted out the inconsistencies in the narration of the Battle of Zama. Dr Yozan Mosig reported that : «*The classical accounts of the battle of Zama... are strangely inconsistent and contradictory. The course of the struggle is unimaginative to the point of being suspect as the alleged outcome of a first-rate military mind such as Hannibal's and even Scipio's. It reads more like the invention of a writer lacking the vision of a great general. The matter of the fictional elephants further reduces credibility. But these are not the only problems with the battle of Zama*...»¹⁵⁹

In addition, if the scrutiny of texts authorizes us to question the reliability of authors, two archaeological facts allow us to go even so far as to put in doubt the veracity of the end of the Second Punic War, as it has been reported to us.

The Roman version is irreconcilable with archaeological facts

1/ THE SITE OF THE BATTLE OF ZAMA REMAINS UNTRACEABLE.

The location of the town of Zama has been the subject of countless works, though there can be no doubt as to its existence¹⁶⁰. However, the more than two-millenia-old uncertainty that lingers as to its location, is disconcerting. Why, of all the great battlefields of military history, is the field of Zama the only one that cannot be located ? There remains no doubt about the locations of Hannibal's victories, therefore, why is there uncertainty about the site of the single Roman victory over Hannibal ? Is it not puzzling that Rome, who occupied Africa for five centuries, and who was usually so prompt in erecting monuments to her glory, did not see fit to immortalize the site of the most important victory of her entire history ? And finally, why didn't a single author ever indicate in a precise fashion the location for this battle that ought to have become sacred ?

2/ THE DATING OF THE MILITARY PORT

The second archaeological fact is even more disturbing, and concerns the dating of the famous Circular Harbor of Carthage. Archeologists of the British mission¹⁶¹ dated it back to the second century BCE. Thus, it was constructed between 201 and 146, that is to say, during the last half-century of Punic Carthage's history.

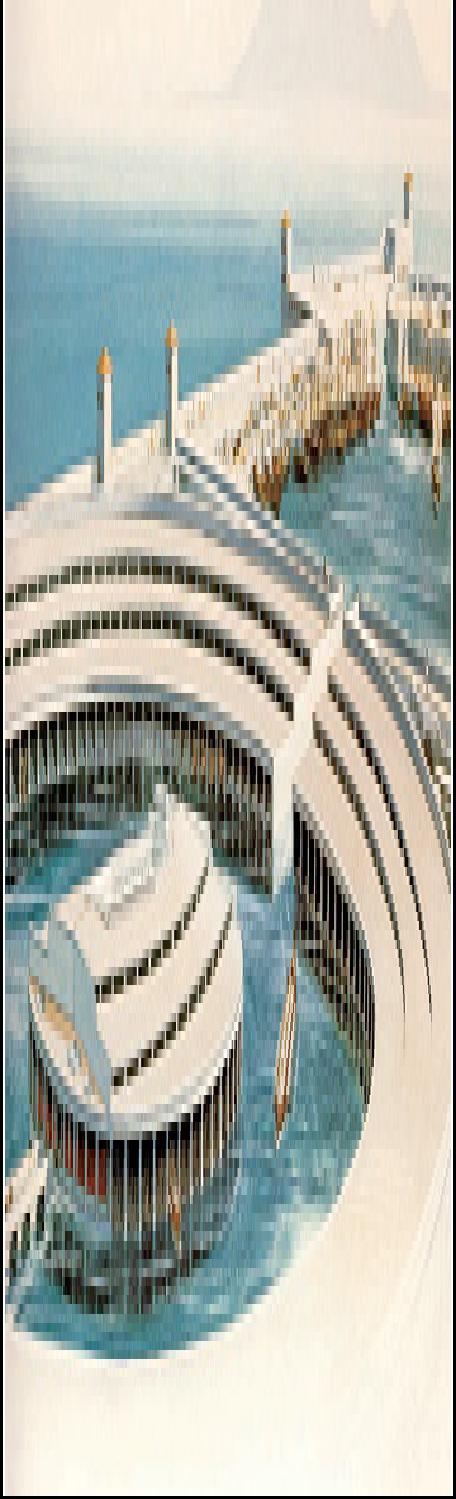
From the outset, the periods of the Third Punic War and immediate pre-war must be excluded, to go back as far as 153, date of the invasion by Masinissa of a great portion of the territory of Carthage. This period of strife, would have hardly allowed him the leisure to launch himself into the construction of military and merchant harbors. Therefore, the Circular Harbor at Carthage was constructed between 201 and 153, a period during which according to the peace treaty of 201, reported to us by Polybius, Carthage was only allowed ten «long» ships¹⁶².

How could Carthage have justified – with respect to the treaty of 201 – the construction of the most powerful and the most brilliant military device of Antiquity – 220 military ships could be simultaneously repaired there – if not, that it was constructed with bellicose intentions ?

We know that Rome only needed a pretext to expedite the end of Carthage¹⁶³. Why did she not seize the excuse of this formidable violation of the peace treaty to declare war ? Rome would indeed later justify her war declaration during the Third Punic War, by accusing Carthage of not having respected the clause forbidding her to wage war, without Rome's express authorization¹⁶⁴. Carthage had then, in 153, taken up arms to defend herself against the invasion of the Great Plains¹⁶⁵ and the territory of Tusca¹⁶⁶ by Masinissa.

If the peace treaty had really prohibited Carthage from possessing a war navy, to be finally rid of her rival, Rome would have pounced on the opportunity of the construction of the military port, instead of pretexting the ban on Carthage of resorting to a defensive war.

THE MILITARY PORT



Graphic reconstructions of the Circular Harbor

The military port, or «Circular Harbor» of Carthage was described in a text by

Appian, drawn from a passage by Polybius that has disappeared.

A number of graphic reconstructions of this port, were based on the study of vestiges, and on Appian's text. He wrote : «*Within the second port was an island which, together with the port itself, was enclosed by high embankments. These embankments were full of shipyards which had capacity for 220 vessels. Above them were magazines for their tackle and furniture. Two Ionic columns stood in front of each dock, giving the appearance of a continuous portico to both the harbor and the island. On the island was built the admiral's house, from which the trumpeter gave signals, the herald delivered orders, and the admiral himself overlooked everything. The island [...] rose to a considerable height, so that the admiral could observe what was going on at sea, while those who were approaching by water could not get any clear view of what took place within. Not even the incoming merchants could see the naval dockyards, for a double wall enclosed them...»*¹⁶⁷. Appian's text is trustworthy, since the calculation of the total length of the docks gives us approximately 1360 meters. Now if we divide this measurement by six – established width of the discovered dry docks – the result is close to the 220 dry docks alluded to in the text¹⁶⁸.



Approximate calculation of the circumference of the two circular embankments of the military harbor. In yellow, form simulation on the scale of a quinquereme.

Up until the end of the twentieth century, historians deemed the Circular

Harbor as dating back to the third century BCE. Thus, they believed that it had been in use during the Second and even during the First Punic Wars. However, its dating to the second century BCE has created a paradox.

According to H. R. Hurst¹⁶⁹, the dual harbors¹⁷⁰, acquired their layout at a date close to 200 BCE. But based upon Polybius, that is to say, the developments following the Battle of Zama and the proscription on Carthage of owning more than 10 warships, Hurst regards as «*inconceivable that she then undertook huge harbor works*» and he suggests a date estimated at the end of the duration of the peace treaty — towards 150 — while manifesting his «*surprise at this belated date for the realization of this great artificial harbor*».

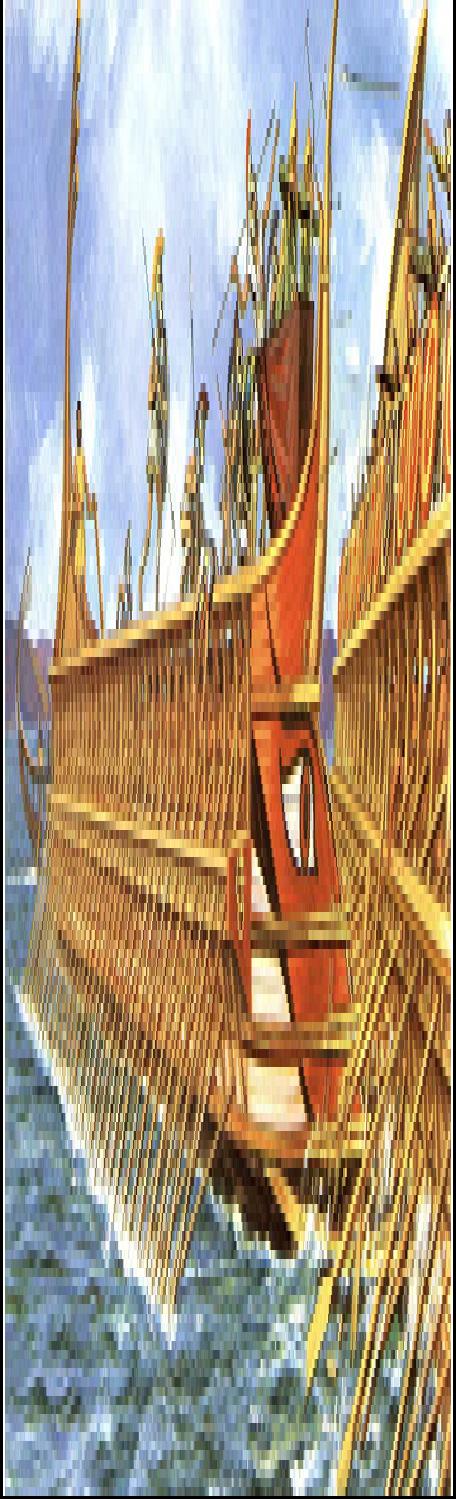
However, this lag of half a century suggested by Hurst, due to his concern for sticking with Polybius, does not resist scrutiny, as since 153, besides Masinissa's invasion, Carthage was subjected to Rome's threats¹⁷¹. The incitement to genocide, the first one recorded in history, was at that time regularly clamored for by Cato the Censor. According to Plutarch, it was by this exclamation «*Delenda est Carthago*» (Carthage must be destroyed !) that Cato ended all his speeches at the Roman Senate, whatever their subject. Plutarch concluded : «*The annihilation of Carthage¹⁷²... was essentially caused by Cato's opinion and advice*». In such threatening circumstances, how could the Punic city have undertaken works of such magnitude ?

At that time, Carthage needed to mobilize all her forces against Masinissa and to take the defensive measures crucial to her survival, not to construct a war harbor, paired with a merchant port adorned with marble porticos. How could it be possible that at such a grave moment in her history, Carthage could think of endowing her trade with a new harbor ?

Such data establish a historical paradox making it almost impossible for the ports to have been constructed during the period mentioned by Hurst.

The most plausible hypothesis is that these harbors were constructed in a period far more congruent with archaeological facts, towards 200 BCE, that is to say, immediately after the war.

The Circular Harbor of Carthage was a resolutely offensive military device. In the naval battles of Antiquity, the principal tactic consisted in spearing ships, below the waterline to sink or disable them.



To try to sink the adversary ship, the spur strikes the hull below the waterline.

The military port of Carthage allowed to simultaneously place 220 ships in dry

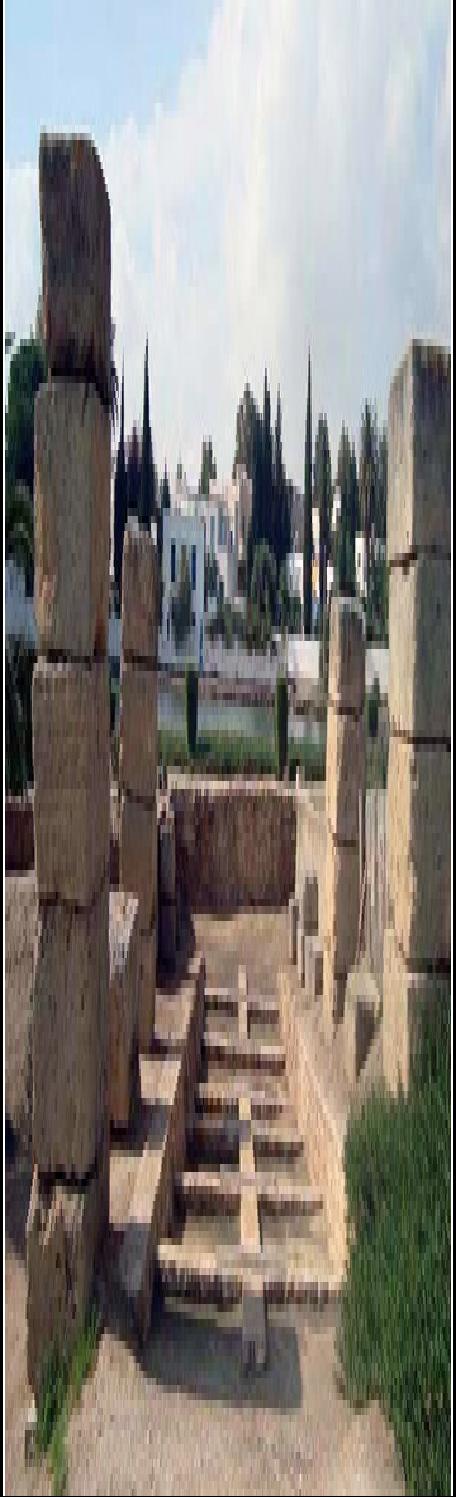
dock for maintenance, offering a practical way of repairing them in excellent conditions, to make them swiftly operational again.



A Carthaginian ship spur

Besides, it is certain that Carthage, that had been a maritime power for centuries, already had one other port, or more, to shelter her ships.

According to many scholarly works, it appears that the Lake of Tunis at its eastern extremity offered a prime location, sheltered from all prevailing winds.

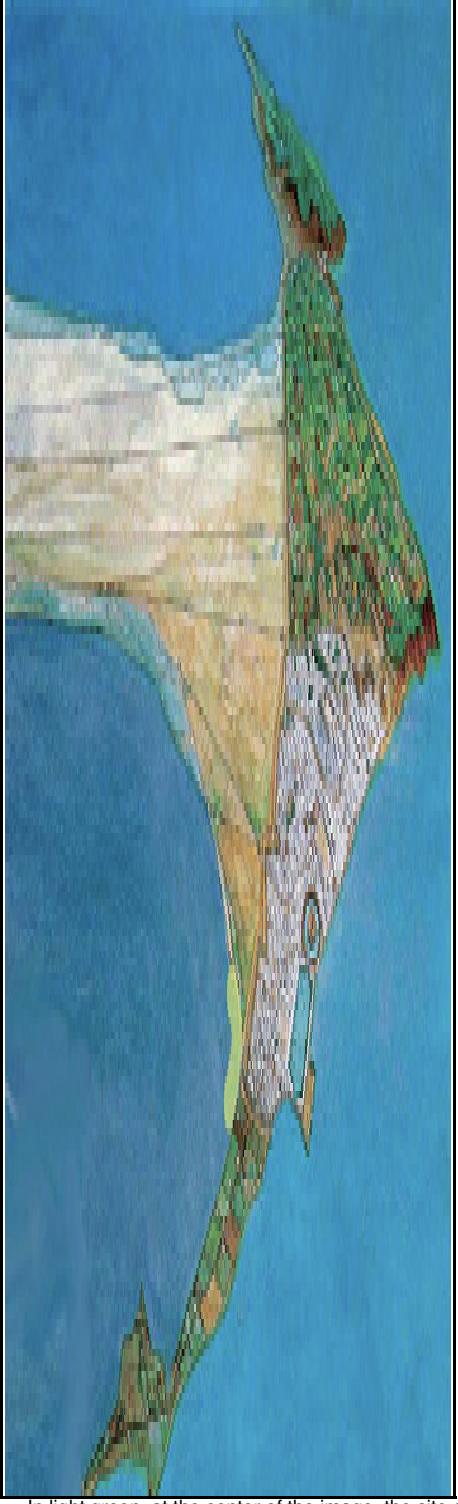


Remains of one of the 220 dry docks of the military port of Carthage

Carthage thus already had at least one home port, endowed with a practically

unlimited capacity and a new war port provided with a 220 dry docks feature.

Can the number of dry docks available in the war port, enable us to estimate the total number of ships that the Carthaginian fleet had available, in the aftermath of the Second Punic War ? To do so, we would have to study the average percentage of damaged ships during a naval battle, subtracting the percentage of ships undergoing maintenance. If we estimate both rather largely to 50% of a fleet, that would mean that the Carthaginian fleet would have had at its disposal, after the Second War, roughly five hundred warships, (notwithstanding the existence of other dry docks pre-existing the Circular Harbor). This estimate seems to be excessive, however it is tenable, as upon his return from Italy Hannibal had ordered the building of many hundreds of warships and troops' transport ships. Furthermore, one must bear in mind that Mago returned from Italy with a large fleet. Besides, the discovery of distinctive signs and numbers on the planks of Carthaginian warships, suggests fairly extensive industrialization, which fact makes half a thousand warships a plausible number, particularly since there was no mention anywhere of a major Carthaginian naval defeat, at the end of the war.



In light green, at the center of the image, the site of the traditional military port of Carthage (drawing by J.C. Golvin, © AMVPPC)

The only historical reference to the Carthaginian naval fleet at the end of the

war, was made by Polybius, who spoke of its scuttling in 202 BCE and as mentioned earlier, of Carthage being authorized to maintain only ten ships. However, Polybius' assertions are now contradicted by archaeological facts, which raises questions about history as it has reached us.

In the aftermath of «Hannibal's war», if Carthage had available five hundred ships and built the circular port for their upkeep, it seems difficult to believe that this would have been done in infringement of the peace treaty. Since Carthage built the military port, this means that the war did not end as Polybius reported by the Battle of Zama, but rather by a peace signed by Carthage's oligarchs, against the advice of their general-in-chief Hannibal, that culminated in his return and that of his brother Mago from Italy.

WHO BUILT THE PUNIC PORTS ?

We know that after the war Hannibal remained in command of the Carthaginian armed forces, that he became suffete of Carthage seven years later (196), and ruled Carthage as chief executive. Between his return from Italy and his departure for the Orient, departure grotesquely misrepresented as an escape by the Ancients, about eight years elapsed during which he remained in power.

History reports that during these years Carthage's territories were perfectly defended, and that Masinissa himself, up until Hannibal's departure for the Orient, never dared to make any incursions into them. History also reports that Hannibal contributed extensively to Carthage's economic development, using his army for works of public interest. Furthermore, Hannibal and his family were famous for being great builders of towns and ports : Akra Leuka¹⁷³, Qart Hadasht¹⁷⁴, Prusa¹⁷⁵, Artaxata¹⁷⁶. Hurst wrote : «We are faced here with a huge achievement of civil engineering — the creation of the two ports — demonstrates the confidence that the Carthaginians had in themselves, and in their capacity for organizing major public works' projects. The Circular Harbour or (the war port) was also a great architectural achievement. The simplicity and the elegance of the concepts that had to be implemented to realize the complexity of such a naval base, show real brilliance and high-level intellectual faculties.»¹⁷⁷

Finally, during Hannibal's last years in Carthage, the Ancients mentioned his «belligerent intentions», which could have translated into his determination to give Carthage the proper means for her defense. Notwithstanding the fact, that certain sources¹⁷⁸ also evoked the agreement between the powerful Seleucid King Antiochus III and Hannibal, to carry out a double offensive, one from Greece and the other from Carthage.

These factors are the only ones that expound the construction of this port in the second century BCE.

Therefore, in the current state of historical and archaeological research the two most plausible hypotheses are : that Hannibal either built the war port to ensure the defense of his city against Rome's hegemonic aims, or that he did so with bellicose intentions, as revealed by the very nature of the port, to organize with his ally Antiochus, the double offensive mentioned by Cornelius Nepos. Which

offensive ultimately would not occur because of the wavering of the Seleucid king.

Inventing Zama : a necessity for Rome

While it is unnecessary to ponder over the inconsistencies of Polybius and Livy as to the course of the actual battle, it is essential to mention the article¹⁷⁹ by Dr Y. Mosig and I. Belhassen who convincingly demonstrate the necessity for Rome of creating a Zama : «Only by taking into account Hannibal's victories (...) can we gain a measure of the magnitude of the humiliation Rome experienced at the hands of the great Carthaginian hero, who remained undefeated on Italian soil for 15 years. We can then comprehend the psychological and political need to (...) exaggerate and distort the account of Zama...». The authors continue : «The descriptions of Cannae and Zama in Roman historiography offer a curious reciprocal contrast», and say that Rome had a desperate need for a hero, behind whom the people could rally to restore lost confidence. Rome also desperately needed a great victory, comparable to that of Cannae, to wipe out the disgrace of the humiliating defeat.

With the Battle of Ilipa, Scipio ended up in control of all Spain and returned to Rome as a hero. All eyes focused on him and he was elected consul in 205. He was then logically appointed to lead the Roman armies against Hannibal, to end the war. But as we have already seen, Scipio refused.

He preferred to go warmongering in Africa. The debates in the Roman Senate were heated : why go to Africa when Carthage's armies were in Italy ? Scipio was finally given a free rein but, in return, the Senate forbade him from taking Italy's defense forces that were enduring Mago in the north, and Hannibal in the south. Scipio was thus tasked with singly managing to muster his expeditionary force.

This situation was somewhat incongruous. Scipio, the people's hero and considered to be the only man capable of coming to terms with Hannibal, refused to attack Hannibal's forces (about 40,000 men) though he was at the head of a regular army of at least 350,000 men (among which 20,000 cavalry), yet he decided to muster a makeshift army and go to Africa...

How did Scipio, who refused to accept the command of the Roman army to defeat Hannibal in Italy, plan to defeat him in his own territory, in Africa, with a second-rate army whose lack of discipline and preparedness was berated by Quaestor Cato ?¹⁸⁰

In reality, Scipio was acquainted with Hannibal's exceptional tactical power and had no desire to fight him. At the Battle of Ticinus, he rescued his father saving him from a certain death. At the Battle of Cannae, fighting within an army roughly three times more numerous than Hannibal's, he only owed his salvation to flight, leaving behind him the greatest military defeat in history¹⁸¹.

Scipio was planning other schemes and did not aspire to a confrontation with Hannibal.

In 206, Scipio had sailed from Cartagena in Spain to Africa, to meet Syphax¹⁸² in his capital Siga. He arrived there at the same time as Hasdrubal Gisco, who was travelling from Gades to Carthage and also wanted to meet the king.

Hasdrubal Gisco was not one of Hannibal's generals. In 215, he was appointed by the Senate to bring reinforcements¹⁸³ to Hannibal. Consequently, unlike officers under Hannibal's orders, Hasdrubal Gisco obeyed the Carthaginian authorities.

Was the arrival of the two enemy generals in Siga at the same time fortuitous ? Livy reported that Scipio had sent Laelius to prepare for the meeting¹⁸⁴.

Livy related that Hasdrubal Gisco arrived at the port of Siga with seven triremes, while two enemy quinqueremes (Scipio's) appeared off the harbor. The historiographer accounted for the surprising lack of reaction of the Carthaginian, in the following way : «...hit by a freshening breeze from the sea, which filled the sails of the quinqueremes and carried them into port before the Carthaginians could get up their anchors. As they were now in the king's harbour, no one ventured to make any further attempt to molest them.»¹⁸⁵

Would a quinquereme having 300 oarsmen keep its sails up with a tailwind blowing, when nearing a port ? We should leave the answer to this question to the experts. It should be noted that even after having left Siga harbor, Hasdrubal Gisco did not take any offensive action against his enemy.

According to Livy¹⁸⁶, Hasdrubal Gisco and Scipio empathized to a great degree at their host Syphax' court. They were even said to have shared a same «triclinium» or couch on which they lounged to eat. «... they dined together in the king's house. On the same couch even, since the king would have it so, Scipio and Hasdrubal reclined.»

Undeniably strange relationship one must admit, for two belligerants in one of the most terrible conflicts of Antiquity. Could we even imagine Irwin Rommel and Bernard Montgomery reclining on a same sofa to share food in the midst of the Second World War, thus spurning a rare and unhesitated opportunity of dealing a fatal blow to the enemy ?

Livy recounted that Hasdrubal Gisco was overwhelmed with admiration for Scipio, «... he plainly showed that when he met him face-to-face, Scipio seemed even more marvellous than in his achievements in war» and declared that «it was not so essential for the Carthaginians to inquire how their Spanish provinces had been lost as to consider how they were still to hold Africa. [...]» and that Scipio was in Siga because «he was cherishing a hope of conquering Africa.» Livy added that the Carthaginian was obsessed by one question, during this meal : «It had long been (his) constant reflexion, his open complaint, (...) that he (Scipio) was not waging war in Africa, as Hannibal was in Italy.»

Hasdrubal Gisco, a Carthaginian general, was thus indignant that the Roman Scipio was not waging war in Africa. Livy's insistence on this subject leaves little room for doubt as to the main topic of conversation, as well as to Hasdrubal Gisco's implication in a shady deal. Had he informed Scipio of the willingness of

Carthaginian oligarchs to end the war ?

Had he not, in 215, at the behest of the oligarchs, diverted to Spain the expeditionary corps intended for Hannibal, at the moment when the latter was within an inch of winning the war ? At that time, it was already a clear sign of the strategic priorities of the Carthaginian authorities. Now that Spain was lost to them, and that the oligarchs no longer considered this war as their prime concern, did they have new objectives of which Hasdrubal Gisco was the spokesperson ? Such an extrapolation is admittedly tenuous, but the numerous mentions made by Livy at the moment of the meeting of the two enemy generals, of a landing of Scipio's in Carthage, two years before it actually happened is unsettling. Particularly, Hasdrubal's umbrage that Scipio «...was not waging war in Africa...», bears resemblance to a proposition, especially since it came from an officer at the orders of the Senate of Carthage.

Hasdrubal Gisco, described by Livy as the most cowardly of generals «...a general very swift in flight»¹⁸⁷, would later be confronted to Scipio on Carthaginian territory. He would make it through all military operations unscathed and would never be mentioned at Hannibal's side, after his landing in Africa. Yet, we know Hannibal's interest in obtaining intelligence about his enemies, and Hasdrubal Gisco was in the best position to inform him about Scipio.

Having been introduced into the private sphere of the Carthaginian oligarchs' secret tactics, thanks to Hasdrubal Gisco, we can conjecture that Scipio was henceforth well informed of their political game, and the extreme strain in relations between the Carthaginian government and Hannibal¹⁸⁸.

Hannibal's exclamation after having received the order from the Carthaginian Senate to leave Italy, is enlightening in this regard : «... it is not the Roman people who have been so often routed and cut to pieces that have vanquished Hannibal, but the Carthaginian Senate by their detraction and envy. It is not Scipio who will pride himself and exult over the disgrace of my return so much as Hanno who has crushed my house, since he could do it in no other way, beneath the ruins of Carthage.»¹⁸⁹

Did Scipio immediately grasp the personal advantage¹⁹⁰ that he could capitalize on from the information supplied — and perhaps even the proposition — made to him by Hasdrubal Gisco ?

Scipio, crafty political strategist that he was, must have thenceforth concocted the plan that he would present a little time later to Rome. His scheme consisted in landing on Carthaginian territory to defeat a few armies — which were opportunely led by Hasdrubal Gisco and Syphax — thus giving Carthaginian senators the opportunity they had been waiting for so impatiently of signing a peace treaty¹⁹¹.

Was this the reason why Scipio settled for a second-rate army that Cato castigated for its lack of preparation ? Did he view his African campaign as not being very hazardous, since he shared the same objective as Carthaginian authorities and had probably even already agreed upon it with their spokesman, as the meeting at Siga strongly suggests ?

From this same logic probably derived the fact that Carthaginian senators had not called Hannibal back. Why were oligarchs so anxious to sign a peace treaty ? Why not summon back Hannibal to fight the Romans in Carthage, rather than sign an armistice ?

Why did Carthaginian senators betray Hannibal ?

One has to grasp the real weight of the Barcid family as well as the actual power of Carthaginian senators, to better understand prevailing relations between the two factions. This enduring bitter relationship led oligarchs in power to betray Hamilcar Barca at the end of the First Punic War, then his son Hannibal at the end of the Second Punic War.

Power in Carthage had been for centuries the exclusive domain of extremely wealthy oligarchs, who had powerful commercial networks in numerous cities over the entire western Mediterranean, and who preferred the government of Carthage to be weak and at their mercy.

Hamilcar, was the natural leader of the Reformers' Party¹⁹², whose goal was a more powerful state, able to defend the Republic of Carthage against the repeated assaults of a hegemonic Rome, and he was the hero of the Sicilian War. After his victory in the Mercenary War he had the possibility of seizing power, but he had a greater vision and broader aims. He had negotiated with his Conservative adversaries his withdrawal from political life, in return for a reform which granted the army the choice of its chief. This reform had considerable consequences over subsequent events.

After having divested the oligarchs from their control over the army, Hamilcar, new commander-in-chief, elected by the military staff and supported by the People's Assembly, had occupied the rich Iberian Peninsula and founded an Iberian-Carthaginian state, with Akra Leuka¹⁹³ as its capital. We need to creditably gauge the significance of this major development project that enabled Carthage both to compensate for her lost territories, as well as to acquire the military and financial means to defend herself against Rome's imperialistic surges, which had caused her to be deprived of Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, thus destroying her trading system.

After Hamilcar's death, the wealthy Iberian-Carthaginian state further expanded and prospered, under the leadership of his son-in-law Hasdrubal the Fair, who founded the new capital Cartagena. Then his son Hannibal extended its area of influence, while marking his power with a federal imprint.

In 218 when Rome declared war, Hannibal was not a mere general but a head of state, as well as a military commander in charge of the entire area of Carthaginian influence, from the Gulf of Sirte in Libya to the Pyrenees¹⁹⁴. Actually, Hannibal was at that time much more powerful than all the leaders of the metropolis reunited, and he managed the Carthaginian-Iberian state whose revenues were as substantial as those of the Republic of Carthage.

All this should be borne in mind when speaking of the Second Punic War. The

wealthy and powerful senators, supporters of the old Carthaginian parliamentary system which left little power to the executive, dreaded the Barcids' personal power. The latter had indeed set up a new state, whose structure and administrative efficiency had nothing in common with those of the old Carthaginian regime.

The Hannibalic «revolution»

Hannibal, at the head of a genuine international coalition gathering Libyans, Carthaginians, Numidians, Iberians, Gauls, Italics, Sards, Balearics, Greeks, etc., fomented a real revolution in the course of his offensive in Italy : in all the regions that had lost their independence, democrats dismissed aristocrats, who were subjected to Rome and pledged allegiance to Hannibal... It was this authentic democratic revolution that the Carthaginian oligarchs viewed through jaundiced eyes. They ultimately no longer considered Hannibal as an ally, but as a political rival, perpetuating Hamilcar's work and the bearer of reformist and revolutionary ideas. Hannibal became in their eyes a much more dangerous threat to their power than Rome was.

From the beginning of the war, oligarchs were reluctant to send reinforcements to their general-in-chief, reckoning that his institutional independence from their power released them from this obligation. Not receiving any additional manpower, resulted in Hannibal's forces being too scarce for him to disperse them, in the defense of regions that had pledged allegiance to him. Therefore, as soon as his back was turned, liberated Italic people were very severely punished by Rome. Hannibal was thus compelled to stake his all and ask his brothers for reinforcements, though they were also confronted to Rome's armies in Spain.

This new strategy weakened Spain causing its loss. It would be the straw that broke the camel's back. Carthage's oligarchs who totally disagreed with Hannibal's political and strategic project, would never forgive him for having deprived them of the riches of Spain, in order to pursue «his» war in Italy.

In 205, Hannibal's youngest brother Mago finally arrived at the head of a fleet and an army. Mago did not land in the south of Italy, already occupied and safeguarded by Hannibal, but in the north which he occupied relatively quickly. Their objective was to meticulously prepare the final double offensive against Rome's armies.

It was from this point that Roman senators and Carthaginian oligarchs' interests converged. The Romans, since Cannae in 216, had avoided coming into direct conflict with Hannibal, and greatly feared the double offensive that was being prepared ; as for the oligarchs, they wanted to avoid at all costs a triumphant return of Hannibal. He was already idolized by the people and a final victory of the Carthaginian's would most certainly cause the downfall of their regime, and the end of their political power.

legates that both the senate and the people had readily accepted the treaty he had made with the Carthaginians and were ready to comply with all his requests, was highly gratified by this...»¹⁹⁵.

With this treaty Rome, Scipio and the Carthaginians oligarchs' had achieved their goals : the unexpected end for Rome of a terrible war, a triumph for Scipio, and a peace treaty on very favorable terms for the Carthaginian authorities. However, in the Ancients' writings, the peace is belittled and seen as a boon for Carthage and an act of generosity on the part of Rome. Polybius and later Livy's grandiloquence on the matter reached peak levels. The Carthaginian negotiators sent to Rome were supposedly treated as spies, liars and bunglers and expelled from the territory. And Hannibal, that all the forces of Rome put together had been unable to defeat, and even less to banish from Italy, suddenly became in the historiographers' words, frail, vulnerable, apathetic and even admiring of Scipio.

The writings of the Ancients aim at misleading us into believing that the peace was immediately sabotaged by Carthaginian supporters of the war, and that it thus never became effective.

The Caepio affair

In Rome, after signing the peace treaty when positions for the year 202 were being assigned, excitement was at fever pitch ; consuls were on their toes for the African position. Why did they care so much about obtaining a posting in Africa ? Did they no longer dread the Hannibal that they had never succeeded in vanquishing in Italy, once he would be on African soil ? In fact, they had understood that henceforth the trump card was in the hands of the peace-loving Carthaginian oligarchs, and no longer at the behest of the dangerous Hannibal. Clearly, they had grasped that they would having nothing further to do with Hannibal, and they wanted to seize this opportunity to gain personal glory.

After Hannibal's departure, one of the new consuls Gnaeus Servilius Caepio, «fully persuaded that the credit of restoring peace in Italy was due to him, and that it was he who had driven Hannibal out of the country, followed the Carthaginian commander to Sicily, intending to sail from there to Africa. When this became known in Rome the senate (...) thought it right that he should remain in Italy. (...) it was resolved to appoint P. Sulpicius Dictator, and he by virtue of his superior authority recalled the consul to Italy ...»¹⁹⁶.

Livy disclosed here not only the level of excitement that gripped the consul, but also the gravity of his actions. To prevent Caepio from following through on his adventure, the Senate appointed a dictator to remove him from office. Why this extreme measure when reinforcements would not be without use to Scipio ? Was there a nonextant clause in the peace treaty of 203 that prohibited any arrival of reinforcements ? Logically, a reciprocity clause concerning the movements of belligerants must have been included in the peace treaty. The return of Carthaginian forces from Italy was certainly contingent on the departure of Roman forces from Carthage. It is this clause, forgotten or rather disregarded by the Ancients, that the Caepio affair reveals. This tells us that the peace treaty of

203 was in force, and that Rome and Scipio were concerned with respecting it, by avoiding that reinforcements should land in Africa and thus jeopardize it. Hence the necessary recourse by Rome to dictatorship to halt Caepio's progress towards Africa. It appears that the only expedition of military reinforcements referred to, until the end of the war, was Caepio's and it was vigorously halted. All other expeditionary shipments from Rome to Africa, regarded only provisions : Rome dispatched from Sardinia «*a hundred transports carrying supplies and escorted by twenty warships.*»¹⁹⁷ Same process for Sicily from which were dispatched under the orders of Gnaeus Octavius «*two hundred transports and thirty warships*»¹⁹⁸; the warships mentioned here must not give rise to confusion, they were only charged with escorting the supplies' convoy. All this occurred despite the fact that in Rome, everyone was conscious of the need for strengthening Scipio's ranks : «...*There was also a feeling of anxiety as to what the issue would be now that the whole brunt of the war fell upon one army and one commander*»¹⁹⁹.

Yet, following Hannibal and Mago's departure from Italy, many legions were now available. Therefore, why only send supplies to Africa when Scipio must have been in urgent need of reinforcements ? He indeed controlled several territories around Carthage that required contingents, thereby reducing his combat strength.

In March 202, that is to say six months before «Zama», elected consuls wanted, yet again, to obtain the African province²⁰⁰, but the plebeian tribune opposed this and an intermediate solution was applied : Consul Tiberius Claudius Nero was commissioned with leading a fleet of reinforcements to Africa and sharing commandment with Scipio. However, Tiberius only left Rome at the end of the year, then enduring storms and hurricanes he never arrived to Africa ...

Livy mentioned another supply fleet that arrived just after Zama, when Scipio returned to the coast having received intelligence that P. Lentulus had arrived off Utica «*with 50 warships and 100 transports loaded with supplies of every kind*»²⁰¹ ; thus, Scipio was never sent Roman legions he only received supplies.

The effects of hurricanes and storms, as well as the influence of the tribune of the plebs²⁰² led to a constant : the absence in Africa of forces other than those of Scipio's friends, Laelius and Massinissa, and consequently of other Roman senior officials. The war in Africa was strangely personal, be it at the level of Scipio's companions or even of his enemies, his former intimates Syphax and especially Hasdrubal Gisco.

Reactions at the Roman Senate

The Ancients informed us that some voices in Rome were raised against the peace treaty of 203, which left Carthage in full possession of her resources. «*Hannibal would be a more formidable foe in his own country than he had been on alien soil*», foretold Quintus Fabius Maximus before he died²⁰³.

Several high-ranking Romans spoke of a truncated peace. That Scipio should be crowned with the greatest victory in Rome's history from the sole fact of having defeated insignificant generals²⁰⁴ was barely palatable, but worse still were the

facts that Hannibal was still invulnerable, that his army remained intact and that Carthage's territory had not been affected by the war : all these factors turned Scipio's victory into a deception that revolted them. They demanded greater guarantees against the dreaded Hannibal, they shouted it out loud and clear in the Senate and made it known to Scipio, who understood that his triumph was fragile, as demonstrated by the Caepio affair, that exposed the opportunism of consuls who wanted to share the honor of this easy victory.

Resumption of fighting ?

If the peace of 203 really occurred, what took place afterwards ? How can we unravel the jumble of subterfuges performed by Scipio — plagued by senators' criticism — or the manipulations accomplished by Polybius who wrote in thrall to his patrons, the Cornelii Scipiones family half a century later ? One can only make assumptions. In this regard, the story of the breach of the treaty and the resumption of fighting at the moment when Hannibal left Italy to return to Africa, does not reflect any logic whatsoever. It is hard to envision these Carthaginian war supporters evoked by the Ancients, conspiring for the resumption of combats, before the imminent arrival of their commander-in-chief and without his consent. As to the narrative about Scipio's raid, who «*himself went round the towns, no longer receiving the submission of those which offered to surrender, but taking them all by assault and selling the inhabitants as slaves...*»²⁰⁵, it does not seem to serve any strategic imperative. If Scipio was about to do battle with Hannibal in person this time, he would not have wasted his time in useless operations, likely to further mobilize Carthaginians against him. He would have instead used this time to receive legions as reinforcements and to prepare for the final battle. It would be more logical to consider that peace was still in vigor, and that by these imaginary collective punishments, Scipio was responding to Rome's criticism about his truncated peace, which had left Carthage's territories inviolate.

Hannibal's lack of response

It was probably during the autumn of 203 that Hannibal disembarked in Leptiminus with his best troops, on his return from Italy. «Zama» purportedly took place in the autumn of 202. Strangely, very little is known about Hannibal's activities during all this time.

According to Polybius, «*the Carthaginians, when they saw their towns being sacked, sent to Hannibal begging him not to delay, but to approach the enemy and decide matters by a battle*»²⁰⁶. Livy had Hannibal march towards Zama a few days after he landed. However, nearly a year passed between Hannibal's disembarkment and his move towards «Zama». How could Hannibal, famous for the swift and redoubtable marches he executed with his army, remain inactive while Scipio ransacked the territory ? Why would this man who had at all times accomplished the impossible to protect his foreign allies, suddenly become apathetic and

insensitive in the face of the distress of his fellow citizens ? Finally, how could Hannibal possibly answer the messengers sent from Carthage, who pleaded with him to take up arms to stop Scipio's abuses against civilians, to «pay attention to other matters and be at their ease about this, for he himself would judge when it was time to act»²⁰⁷.

The only convincing reason for Hannibal's idleness during an entire year, would be that the peace of 203 was still effective for the belligerents.

New treaty or new clauses ?

While Hannibal was at a standstill in Hadrumetum²⁰⁸, what was Scipio doing ? Why didn't he leave the country ? Did he want to take advantage of the oligarchs' submissiveness to obtain other concessions, thus attempting to silence the critics in the Senate of his truncated peace ? In order to do so, he had a ready-made solution : negotiating an aggravation of the terms of the treaty with the oligarchs. They had already done so much to defeat Hannibal's efforts, that they certainly would not procrastinate in the face of new demands from Scipio.

The Roman had a legitimate basis for aggravating the terms of the treaty : Hasdrubal Gisco, at the head of a fleet of fifty vessels, had seized and towed Roman supply vessels who had been caught in a storm and then were stranded on the island of Aegimouros²⁰⁹ and at the Hot Springs of Carpis²¹⁰. Scipio could legitimately demand their restitution as well as reparation for their capture : Livy later distinctly mentioned this claim of Scipio's in the listing of new peace conditions dictated to the Carthaginians in 202-201.²¹¹

If after the peace treaty of 203 and Hannibal's return, Scipio long delayed in leaving Carthage's territory (though it was most certainly stipulated in a clause of that treaty that he must do so), it would be logical that Hannibal after having had plenty of time to strengthen and prepare his army, could have lost patience and left Hadrumetum to move towards the northwest, to isolate the Roman from his Numidian allies. This movement towards the northwest would explain an ostensible presence of Hannibal's in the vicinity of present-day Jama.

If, as we assume, the peace was still in vigor, the oligarchs on their own initiative or under Scipio's influence, would have undoubtedly urged Hannibal to respect both the treaty and the Constitution²¹², and return to his quarters.

Hannibal was a legalist and thus he certainly would have returned to his military base in Hadrumetum. However, a manipulator of the ilk of Scipio's²¹³ could have capitalized on his triumph, by converting Hannibal's withdrawal into a fear of combating him, as extensively reported to us in the exceedingly fictional dialogue between the two generals. His skills as a propagandist, and his arrival in Rome with these new developments – the obligation to retreat required from Hannibal and the increase in the financial clause – would do the rest.

A half-century later, his adoptive grandson Scipio Aemilianus would order Polybius to permanently endorse this version of facts²¹⁴, suppressing all other sources, while he would personally take charge of obliterating Carthage, its

population and its history from the surface of the Earth.

Rome so desperately needed to expunge the memory of the dreadful humiliations inflicted upon her by Hannibal during the entire war, that she authenticated a fallacious victory through propaganda and misinformation, to salvage her lost honor. Subsequent events will show beyond doubt that though senators agreed to corroborate his alleged victory, they nonetheless never forgave Scipio for his deception. His triumph was moderately celebrated²¹⁵, and his political career was cut short when he was accused in a serious case of corruption regarding... another peace treaty²¹⁶.

Rereading the treaty

The terms of the peace treaty of 201 have from the earliest times been described as «very harsh» — probably to differentiate them from those of the treaty of 203, of which they are only, as we will see, the emanation — but this description does not stand up to analysis.

HANNIBAL'S FATE

The man whom the Romans accused of being the instigator of this conflict²¹⁷, he who caused the death of hundreds of thousands of Italics and numerous high-ranking Romans, among whom Scipio's father and uncle, he who was within an inch of disbanding the Italic Confederation, that same man remained at the head of the Carthaginian army. He would even become suffete a few years later, that is to say head of the Republic. Could Hannibal have exercised these post-war activities if his army had been decimated and if he had fled from the enemy ? How could Rome have accepted that her worst enemy remain at the head of the army, and later become chief executive ?

THE ARMY'S FATE

The army was not decimated, texts stated that Hannibal used it for civilian missions. His soldiers accomplished many great works and planted the olive groves of the Sahel, that have represented the wealth of Tunisia for centuries and whose ancient olive trees are still standing to this day, for a number of them. Within this army developed the navy, as proved by the postwar construction of the Circular Harbor, which demonstrates the falsity of the clause regarding the restriction of the fleet to ten warships.

WAR REPARATIONS

Nothing allows us to question war claims, they are moreover justifiable in view of the inestimable damage suffered by Rome on her territory, whereas war very little affected Carthage's territory. However, the financial clause already existed in the treaty of 203. If, as the doctrine generally considers, it was an indemnity of 5000 talents which must be retained, it is surprising that this indemnity was only doubled²¹⁸ by the treaty of 201, in spite of Hannibal's presumed defeat. If the latter had actually taken place, Scipio would have demanded a much larger compensation.

We know that a few years later, Carthage offered to pay Rome the full amount in advance, which is indicative of the all relative significance of these war reparations for the Punic city. It is also worth noting that twelve years later in the Treaty of Apamea, Rome imposed on Antiochus war damages of 15,000 talents, payable in twelve years, for a conflict that lasted only four years and caused damages incommensurate with the magnitude of those suffered by Rome during the Second Punic War.

THE PROHIBITION ON CARTHAGE OF MAKING WAR

The only dangerous clause for Carthage was the one prohibiting her from making war, even in her own defense, without Rome's authorization.

In 195, when Antiochus became a threat to Rome's interests, the Senate's chief concern, expressed by Livy : «*it was more to be considered what Hannibal and the Carthaginians would do if war should break out with King Antiochus*»²¹⁹.

Would Rome be preoccupied by a Carthage that had no army and only possessed ten warships ?

Throughout the period when Hannibal was still in Carthage, Masinissa never encroached upon the Republic's territory. Would a disarmed Carthage have been able of preventing him from doing so ?

According to Livy it was in 193, after Hannibal's departure²²⁰, that Masinissa started to encroach on Carthage's territories. Polybius placed these encroachments at a much later date, in 162-161²²¹ and added : «*He (Masinissa) easily made himself master of the open country as he could command it, owing to the Carthaginians, who had always been poor soldiers, having latterly become completely enervated in consequence of the long peace. He could not, however, get hold of the towns as they were carefully guarded by the Carthaginians...*»²²². This not only means that Carthage was armed, but also that combats took place. Furthermore, the Romans called upon to arbitrate in the dispute did not refer to the clause prohibiting Carthage from making war : «*Both parties appealed to the senate about their differences, and numerous embassies had come from both on the subject, but the Carthaginians always came off second best at Rome, not because they had not right on their side, but because the judges were convinced that it was in their own interest to decide against them*»²²³.

Besides, other rather troubling Carthaginian acts of war had been reported.²²⁴

THE TREATY OF 201 CANNOT BE CONSECUTIVE TO A MILITARY DISASTER

A major military defeat in open country, that purportedly decimated the Carthaginian army turning the tide strategically in favor of Rome, would have resulted in a total overhaul of the treaty. Far more draconian requirements would have been imposed, especially with regards to Hannibal, whereas what we have here is a mere aggravation of a few clauses of the treaty of 203, as if the alleged greatest victory in the history of Rome were just an appendix of the small skirmishes of 203, that the Romans themselves called insignificant.

18 - Hannibal, Chief Executive

Roman historiography very sparsely chronicles Hannibal's activities in the years following the peace and his return to Carthage. Unable to justify his freedom, his reappointment as commander-in-chief of the Carthaginian forces and even less so, his election as suffete, historiographers chose to remain silent about such a state of affairs, so irreconcilable with their exhibited triumphalism.

If Hannibal was elected suffete (chief executive) in 196, that infers that he enjoyed powerful political support. We may thus conjecture that he had, as his father four decades earlier, become leader of the Reformers' party. Once he was chief executive, upon a financial problem arising, Hannibal summoned the financial comptroller who refused his convocation, as he was to become judge at the Court of the Hundred and Four in the following days, and thus would gain permanent immunity. Hannibal had him arrested and brought before the People's Assembly, where he immediately had a law voted to change the term of office in the Hundred and Four, from life to a year, rescinding the prospect of holding office for two consecutive years. This reform decreased senators' privileges and put a term to the nuisance caused by a Senate under the influence of great Conservative families, who enjoyed the power of undermining executive projects. It was certainly this institution that had caused the blocking of aid and reinforcements that Hannibal so desperately needed while in Italy. With this reform, Hannibal corrected state dysfunction and assumed strengthened executive powers. He used them to uncover the oligarchs' financial speculations and malpractice. He declared before the People's Assembly that by imposing restitution of all embezzled money, Carthage would be able to pay war reparations to Rome, without having to tax individuals. He thus reorganized finances to eliminate corruption and reclaim defrauded funds. We can deduce that these actions displayed the premise of a precise political objective, that of restoring Carthage to her prior economic and military power²²⁵. Hannibal's financial reforms suppressing oligarchs' fraud and bribery, were fearlessly backed by political reforms and amendments. Furthermore, immediately after the peace, he tasked his army with mass planting olive trees.

Hannibal thus employed all vital forces to revive and rehabilitate the Republic. Commemorating these years, Appian insisted upon Carthage's renewed power and population growth. History recorded that barely ten years after the peace, Carthage offered Rome to pay in advance for the forty annuities remaining, but Rome refused. Hannibal's popularity was huge, however, the enmity he induced among the ranks of Conservatives was just as great. His foes wrote countless letters to their Roman friends to denounce his secret contacts with Antiochus of Syria.

It was precisely in this same year that Antiochus became Rome's sworn enemy,

after he signed a personal alliance with the Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt.

We can easily understand that before the imminent opening of an important front to the east of the Mediterranean, Rome would want to rule out a potential danger coming from her worst enemy ; and this without being troubled by qualms, as the Carthaginian senators themselves were pleading with her to do so.

DID HANNIBAL BECOME VULNERABLE ONCE HE WAS ELECTED SUFFETE ?

We know that after the death of his brother-in-law Hasdrubal the Fair in 231, Hannibal became Commander-in-chief of Carthage's armies. We also know that following the Mercenary War and the negotiations between Hamilcar and the Carthaginian Conservatives, the appointment and destitution of the army chief of staff, no longer depended upon the government but were subject to a vote by the People's Assembly, an institution that was notably sympathetic to the Barcids.

In a parliamentary regime such as the one in Carthage, the rule of non-accumulation of mandates was perforce applied. Therefore, before becoming suffete, Hannibal must have resigned his office as commander-in-chief of armed forces, losing the invulnerability he previously enjoyed, in the sense that he could not be discharged from that position. The mandate of suffete provided institutional immunity, but only for one year... Had Rome waited for that moment to put an end to him «civilly», in view of the fact that she had been unable to vanquish him militarily ? Or should Hannibal's departure be seen as a carefully weighed personal decision ?

Was Hannibal replaced at the head of the army by a man sharing his convictions ? Did he go to the Orient leaving behind him a readily mobilizable Carthage ? As we will see, some writings corroborate this thesis.

In any event, Polybius reported that Rome decided to send a delegation with the intention of impeaching Hannibal before the Council of Elders.

No matter how, the two possible versions for Hannibal's departure, voluntary or forced, enlighten us in the same manner as to the political issues and thus the reasons for Carthaginian Conservatives' relentless hostility against him²²⁶. His political project for Carthaginian leadership in the Mediterranean region required the establishment of a modern state, based on efficient taxation and strengthened executive power.

The oligarchs in power had amassed vast fortunes through acquired privileges, and had proved over the years their incompetence in running the State, international politics and military matters. They viewed Hannibal's arrival as the end of their dominant position. To safeguard their privileges, they had been capable of the worst betrayals to the extent of wrecking Hannibal's victory, therefore he had no illusions as to their potential for harming him.

Understanding this, we can better perceive the reasons behind the departure of the Carthaginian for the Orient : his straightforward intellectual honesty, added to thirty years of ceaseless combat for the advancement of Carthage, had turned him into a man who abhorred the pettiness of politics. Being in the habit of identifying his enemy, then circumscribing and fighting him, Hannibal could

neither use hypocrisy nor be subjected to it. Thereby, confronted to a combat that he could not even envisage – that directed by a caste that was against the renaissance of Carthage that he had programmed, put in place and started to implement - Hannibal, in the same way as his father had decided to leave for Spain after the Sicilian War, had understood that he could no longer pursue his battle from Carthage. He had merely to leave there as the least of requirements an organized army, ready to follow him²²⁷ and then move to where had shifted the focal point of the war against Rome, the Middle East.

19 - Hannibal in The Orient

The episode of Hannibal's passage by Cercinna²²⁸ was certainly not that reported by Polybius. Indeed, all clues point to the fact that the inhabitants of Cercinna simply wanted to pay a great tribute to the hero of Carthage, a tribute which does not accord with the Roman version of the escape, that Polybius hastened to misrepresent in a rather improbable fashion. The Cercinna stopover, that Hannibal's trip to the Orient in no way warranted, was probably made for another reason altogether, perhaps for a personal one.

As he was leaving Carthage, did Hannibal suspect that it was in all likelihood the last time he would set eyes on the land of his birth ? Having left Carthage at the age of nine, having lived for twenty years in Spain, sixteen years in Italy and another eight in Carthage, Hannibal was manifestly extremely devoted to it, though he had lived in other lands for many years.

His father died in Spain purportedly in the waters of the river Júcar, his brother Hasdrubal near the river Metaurus, in the center of Italy and his other brother Mago reportedly had the Mediterranean as burial place : there were no graves for him to visit and meditate on. The only symbolic location that could stand as the last dwelling place of the Barcids was the Mediterranean, that Hannibal now crossed with his back to Carthage, to pursue his combat in the Orient.

We can venture to speculate on Hannibal's thoughts as he was leaving Carthage, he surely felt the terrible bitterness of lost opportunities : this country that he came within a hairsbreadth of putting on a pedestal, was self-destructing because of a caste of profiteers who had no sense of statesmanship. In fact, once Hannibal had left, Masinissa immediately started his incursions that half a century later, would lead to the annihilation of the great Punic city.

Hannibal, was perhaps the only man of his epoch to grasp the risks that faced Carthage, and his exile was certainly due to his desire to pursue his combat.

Tyros²²⁹ his first destination, land of origin of the Carthaginians, must have brought to his mind the grand Phoenician adventure, but no more : even though relations between Tyros and Carthage had remained strong²³⁰, over six centuries had passed since the foundation of Carthage. His feelings would be similar to

those of a Tunisian of Andalusian origin going to Spain today.

The city of Tyros, cradle of the founder Elissa-Dido who was revered and worshipped as long as Carthage endured, organized a triumph for Hannibal. After spending some time there he departed for Antioch, then went to Ephesus to meet Antiochus in the autumn of 195. The two men belonged to the same generation, with just a five-year difference in their ages.

Antiochus was in a situation of «cold war» with Rome. The presence of Hannibal at his side could have proven to be a major asset to him: the Carthaginian's war experience, his knowledge of Roman forces, his strategic vision and his tactical capabilities were unique. But Antiochus was an absolute monarch, surrounded by courtiers and he did not realize that Hannibal was the best tactician he could have at his side to confront Rome.

Antiochus strengthened his presence in Thrace and consolidated, at the other extremity of his empire, the peace concluded with Egypt in 195 by marrying his daughter Cleopatra²³¹ to the Egyptian Ptolemy V. Their wedding was celebrated in 194 at Raphia in Palestine, at the boundary of the two empires.

Antiochus was annoyed by the obstinate resistance of Lampsacus and Smyrna²³². Both cities appealed to Rome and were also supported by Eumenes of Pergamon, who had insulted him by refusing to grant him the hand of one of his daughters in marriage.

In the winter 194-193, Antiochus offered Rome a friendship treaty that included their recognition of his sovereignty over Asia Minor and Thrace. The Roman negotiator, Flaminus, suggested as a preliminary condition that Antiochus should keep his distance from Europe, although Thrace²³³ belonged to the king by inheritance.

The negotiations were resumed in the spring. The Roman negotiators were under instructions to first confer with their ally Eumenes of Pergamon, who risked losing all through the treaty. He obviously preached intransigence towards Antiochus. After another failure, negotiations resumed in 193 in Ephesus, however, including delegates from independent cities of Asia Minor into the conference, proved in a definite way that Rome did not seek peace.

Did Antiochus and Hannibal agree²³⁴ to send to Carthage an expeditionary force intended to open a second front against Rome? Antiochus would thus have created through the intermediary of the Carthaginian, a diversion and simultaneously a rebalancing of forces in the Mediterranean. Some sources even reported that Hannibal sent an agent to Carthage to prepare the ground, but his mission was ostensibly uncovered by his eternal adversaries.

Antiochus' failure

Hannibal's meeting with a Roman negotiator who had diligently courted him, had professedly aroused Antiochus' suspicion. Infuriated by his mistrust, Hannibal reportedly told him the famous story of the oath he had supposedly sworn his father, before his departure for Spain, to never be a friend of the Romans.

The king reputedly renewed his confidence in him, but facts don't confirm this.

Antiochus was above all anxious to preserve the totality of the possessions he inherited from his ancestors. He wanted Rome to give him a free rein in managing the Straits. To put pressure on Rome, Antiochus relied on his Aeolian allies in Greece. The latter solicited him to free Greece and to settle the dispute between them and the Romans.

In 192, Demetrias, stronghold of Thessaly held by the Romans for the past four years, defected and fell into the hands of the Aetolians. Antiochus sent a somewhat modest expeditionary force to support them.

War was declared, however Antiochus kept Hannibal at bay and failed to send an expeditionary corps to Carthage.

With a heavy heart, Hannibal witnessed Antiochus' embarking on a losing battle.

The Macedonian phalanx, bristling with its six-meter spears which caused it to be static, was no longer likely to beat Roman legions that had embraced the Carthaginian's tactics of intelligence, mobility, envelopment, encirclement and dislocation of enemy forces.

While parading his highly colorful army, Antiochus asked Hannibal his opinion of their strength. The latter answered ironically that it represented spoils of war to Rome. Although this anecdote is probably untrue, it enables one to get a sense of the relationship between the two men.

After a few successful moves by Antiochus' forces, Hannibal calibrated the king's wins to a more realistic perspective, during the council of war held in Demetrias in the winter of 192-191. He again advocated a war plan intended to stop the Roman advance : first, the strengthening of naval forces to block the Adriatic passage, while another squadron would skirt Sicily to open a western front against Rome (and Carthage, thanks to its military port, could constitute a very solid base for this mission) ; next, his plan provided for the concentration of all land forces on the right bank of the Aoos river²³⁵, to close the main access to Greece. But Antiochus disregarded the Carthaginian's advice.

In April 191, in a single confrontation, he was defeated by the Romans at the Battle of Thermopylae. He was forced to retire to Asia Minor. He believed that the Romans would not follow him there, but Hannibal disabused him warning him that he would have to defend Asia against Rome.

Hannibal, admiral

In that same year 191, naval mastery of the Aegean Sea was at stake.

A powerful Roman fleet of more than a hundred ships united with the allied fleets of Eumenes of Pergamon and the Rhodians. The engagement took place near the cape of Corycus and the ascendancy of Romans in boarding battles, weighed heavily in their favor. In 190, to repair the losses to Antiochus' fleet, Hannibal went to Phoenicia to muster and arm a squadron of reinforcements. Soon after, a large part of the allied to Rome Rhodian fleet was destroyed by

Polyxenidas, an admiral in the service of Antiochus. Rome then decided to send significant reinforcements to Macedonia, headed by the Scipios. Antiochus made a request for negotiations but Eumenes of Pergamon rejected this request. The Roman fleet was then concentrated at Samos. To counter it, the fleet of Ephesus and Hannibal's fleet in Tyros had to unite, however, the Rhodians sailed to meet with Hannibal's fleet.

In the meantime, Hannibal had again fallen prey to Antiochus' unpredictability : a mere courtier, Apollonius, was entrusted with the command of half his squadron.

The Rhodians confronted him with thirty-two quadriremes²³⁶. Hannibal had available four hexaremes and three septiremes, as well as thirty quinqueremes. One should neither be abused as to Hannibal's purportedly «bigger» ships, nor as to their supposed numerical superiority in the accounts of the naval battle. A quinquereme was thirty-seven meters in length and seven in width. Whereas a Rhodian quadrireme was fifty meters long and six meters wide. Thus, the thirty-two Rhodian vessels had dominance dimensionwise over Hannibal's quinqueremes. Only his four hexaremes and three septiremes could compensate for this advantage in size.

The two fleets met in August off the coast of the Side peninsula. The seaward wing led by Hannibal was victorious, however he was unfortunately not the commander-in-chief of the entire fleet. Nonetheless, he cut the enemy line and encircled the Rhodian admiral and his vanguard. Once Apollonius was defeated, however, Rhodian forces who had been attacking him were free to turn to assault Hannibal. Just as the Rhodian admiral Eudamus' squadron was losing to that of Hannibal, it was succored, which fact halted Hannibal's progress and the successful outcome of the battle. Hannibal's squadron only lost one ship, a hexareme. Of the thirty-six remaining vessels, four could not be repaired and twelve damaged vessels were towed by the twenty undamaged ones for refit. Hannibal thus returned with thirty-two ships.

Disgusted with both Antiochus for his unpredictability and his courtier Apollonius for bringing about the defeat, Hannibal left for Crete, where there was a federation of free and warmongering Greek cities. Meanwhile, to the north of Ephesus, the eighty pro-Roman vessels prevailed over the royal fleet. Antiochus evacuated all Greece, even leaving Lysimachia to the Romans, though it was an unassailable town. This enabled them to cross to Asia without needing a fleet. He was just barely beaten on land by Scipio at Magnesia, but the ultimate defeat was total, both on land and sea. By the peace treaty of Apamea, Antiochus pledged to pay war reparations of a value of 15,000 talents and to hand Hannibal over to the Romans.

But Hannibal had already left, sick at heart. Once again, jealousy, inconsistency and incompetence had deprived him from a great victory over Rome. Maybe Antiochus eventually regretted not having entrusted Hannibal with his army.

20 - Hannibal's Last Years

Following Antiochus' defeat, as we have already mentioned, Hannibal's itinerary took him to Crete. According to Nepos²³⁷, he was presented there with five quinqueremes and troops, to land in Cyrene and force the Africans to form a common front against the Romans. We don't know anything more about the unfolding of this venture, related in a too haphazard and questionable fashion.

Hannibal then left for Armenia. Sources reported his presence at King Artaxias' court. Seduced by the site of the upper valley of the Aras, Hannibal sketched the plans for a new capital there and showed them to the king. Artaxias²³⁸ then begged him to superintend the building of Artaxata²³⁹ in person, from which it earned its nickname of «Armenian Carthage».

Finally we encounter Hannibal with King Prusias of Bithynia, who was engaged in conflict with Eumenes of Pergamon. Hannibal gained victories over him on land and in naval warfare. Nepos and Justin tell us about his prowess and feats in his role of admiral.

Before engaging in a naval battle on the Marmara Sea, the Carthaginian sent an officer with a message addressed to the king in person. In reality, the letter was merely a subterfuge intended to locate Eumenes' flagship. As soon as combat initiated, Hannibal's ships headed at a rush straight towards Eumenes' flagship, that was very nearly captured by the Carthaginian, but sought safety through flight. When the more numerous enemy ships attempted to board his ships, Hannibal had catapults hurl large earthenware jars filled with snakes, onto the powerful Pergamene fleet, which sowed panic in their ranks, forcing them to withdraw from the battle and retreat to their naval bases. «*Thus Hannibal overcame the forces of the Pergamenes by a stratagem, and not just on that occasion, but often at other times he defeated enemies with land forces by means of similar tactical skill.*»²⁴⁰

Then resuming his activity as city planner, Hannibal built Prusias a new capital named Prusa²⁴¹, which was one of the most beautiful cities of Anatolia, and later became the first major capital city of the Ottoman Empire. In the same way as his father Hamilcar founded Akra Leuka²⁴², or his brother-in-law Hasdrubal founded Qart Hadasht²⁴³, Hannibal by planning and supervising the building of Artaxata²⁴⁴ and Prusa also became a legendary master builder of cities.

It was in this last Bithynian refuge that he probably wrote the books that tradition has attributed to him. One was addressed to the Athenians and another to the Rhodians *«Letter to the Rhodians»*²⁴⁵. Thus, espousing the famous saying the pen is mightier than the sword, Hannibal fought his last battle against imperialism with his quill.

In the years following the peace treaty of 201, the Greeks realizing that Philip's

mismanagement and neglect of his alliance with Hannibal had signed the loss of the Hellenistic world, regarded Hannibal as a potential savior right up until his death, which caused them great grief and emotion.

Hannibal's death

Hannibal died in 183 at the age of sixty-five.

Betrayed by his host Prusias²⁴⁶, and discovering that the seven secret exits that he had devised for his villa at Libyssa were monitored by Flaminius' Romans, Hannibal, disappointed for the last time by the thoughtlessness and abjectness of kings, swallowed the poison he always carried with him, hidden in the locket of his poison ring. Thus disappeared, of his own volition, the last of the Barcids.

Surprisingly, the most illustrious member of this great family was the only one not to have lost his life in combat. Buried at Libyssa, present-day Gebze, he is also the only Barca to have a grave. The reason why his tomb has not faded into oblivion, is thanks to Septimius Severus' begrudging admiration for him. Indeed, the Roman emperor of Punic culture born in Leptis Magna, four centuries after Hannibal's death, had the Carthaginian hero's tomb coated with fine marble. Seventeen centuries later in 1968, President Bourguiba founder of the Republic of Tunisia, travelling to Turkey asked to pay homage at the sepulcher of the exalted Carthaginian. Very embarrassed the Turks tried to dissuade him, but upon his insistence they took him to a small dilapidated tombstone. Appalled and overwhelmed to tears by the state of neglect of the legendary general's last resting place, Bourguiba pleaded with the Turkish authorities to return the remains of Hannibal to Tunisia. Not agreeing to this demand, but to assuage President Bourguiba's distress and to honor the memory of the hero who had struggled against Roman imperialism, they made investigations and built him a large mausoleum²⁴⁷.

Hannibal thus died in Turkey, Hamilcar in Spain, Hasdrubal in Italy and Mago in the Mediterranean. Of these four illustrious figures who had dedicated their lives to Carthage, not one of them was buried there.

The feeling of bitterness at the lost challenges, should not cause us to forget the magnitude and immortality of the Barcids' labors and more specifically the lifetime endeavors of the most glorious among them, Hannibal. His life was entirely devoted to the rejection of imperialism ; his struggle to achieve this, to which he associated dozens of different peoples and tribes ; his tactical skills, still applied twenty-two centuries after his death ; his edifying strategy and finally his political message, singularly in advance on his time to the extent that we may call it «modern», as it was devoid of any form of exclusivism, religiosity or indoctrination, based on plurality, freedom and diversity and is still valid and relevant to this day. His presidency, which only lasted for one year and yet enabled him to establish the modern state crucial to achieving Carthage's revival ; his departure for the Orient, a true hymn to perseverance and the refusal of old age; and even his death, a persistence of his resistance against the existing order, that he had embodied so perfectly and through which he had chosen freedom

over life. All of this, this «Hannibalic heritage», has been occulted, distorted and demonized for centuries. Today, in a world materialized and cretinized to the extreme, in which the most basic values are vanishing, Hannibal, who dedicated his life to peace and to freedom, still stands tall and proud as one of the most powerful figures in History.

Men disappear, but their ideas perdure and with them the fair and legitimate struggles of Humanity. They may undergo lengthy periods of decline, but contain within them the seeds of their rebirth. The combat that we have recounted here has been betrayed for too long. To dust it off of more than two millenia of lies, is to contribute in bringing to light one of the greatest challenges in the history of Humanity : inasmuch as the Barcids' combat was that of freedom and its corollary, the dignity of people.

- 1 - Février, P. A. *Approches du Maghreb romain*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1989, pp. 23-89.
- 2 - Hannibal's bibliography may be found on the Internet :
<http://www.unk.edu/uploadedFiles/academics/psychology/mosigy/Hannibal.htm>
- 3 - At least four contemporary biographies of Hannibal were mentioned by the Ancients.
- 4 - Hannibal, «Hann-Bâäl», which means «Favor of Baâäl» in Punic.
- 5 - As all events recounted here take place «Before Christ» or «Before Common Era», for the sake of convenience we will not mention «BC» or «BCE» every time.
- 6 - Year 567 of the foundation of Carthage.
- 7 - Hamilcar, «Abd Melqart» which means «Servant of Hercules» in Punic.
- 8 - Should one read into this tardy appointment the intention of the Elders of blaming Hamilcar, their political enemy, for the shame of an expected defeat ?
- 9 - At Mount Eircté - Monte Pellegrino - near Palermo, then at the top of Mount Eryx - Erice - near Trapani.
- 10 - Rome promised funders the reimbursement of costs incurred in case of victory and as a bonus, market shares on conquered territories.
- 11 - Ship of about 50m in length with five oarsmen in three banks of oars (1-2-2), constructed according to the model of a shipwrecked Carthaginian quinquereme.
- 12 - Inhabitants of Marseilles
- 13 - People of probable oriental origin that dominated central Italy until its domination by Rome, in the middle of the 3rd century BC.
- 14 - The Suffetes mandate, in fact the Presidency of the Republic.
- 15 - The Council of Elders
- 16 - The «Council» or «Court of the Hundred and Four». Certain authors consider that the Council of Elders and the Court of the Hundred and Four formed a single institution.
- 17 - The Popular Assembly.
- 18 - In the same way as in the course of the Sicilian War, Conservatives only appointed competent men when the situation was desperate.
- 19 - With whom Hamilcar accepted to share his command.
- 20 - To the west of Hammamet between Sidi Jedidi and Hamam Bent Jedidi is a hill running lengthwise «Al Monchar» (The Saw) the shape of which very clearly evokes the place indicated by Polybius : «The resemblance of this place with the instrument thus called caused it to be given this name.» (I, 85, 7). V. illustration next page. This location was found by Kromayer and Veith whereas François Decret identified it as the «region of Djebel Ressas, between Zaghouan and Grombalia» (François Decret, *Carthage : ou L'empire de la mer*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, coll. «Points histoire», 1977).
- 21 - Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia.
- 22 - Quoted by Theodor Mommsen in «The History of Rome».
- 23 - Alicante
- 24 - Modern Salamanca.
- 25 - *Histoire militaires des Guerres Puniques*, Editions du Rocher, 2003, p 135.
- 26 - Present-day Cádiz.
- 27 - The Temple of Hercules-Melqart on the Islete de Sancti Petri, Cádiz
- 28 - Briquel, Dominique, «Hannibal's propaganda at the beginning of the Second Punic War : comments on the fragments of Silenus of Cale Acte» in María Eugenia Aubet and Manuela Barthélémy (éd.), IV Congreso Internacional de Estudios Fenicios y Púnicos (Cádiz, 2-6 de octubre de 1995), [4 vol.], Cadix, Universidad, 2000, pp. 123-127.
- 29 - Greek Historian from Sicily, Biographer of Hannibal and member of his armed forces' staff. He was quoted by subsequent authors such as Coelius Antipater, Cicero, Silius Italicus and Livy. He is the author of a History of Sicily comprising at least four books and a biography of Hannibal.
- 30 - Cicero «Concerning Divination», I, 48-49.
- 31 - Discourse reported by Livy XXI, 41, 7. «... [7] et utrum Hannibal hic sit aemulus itinerum Herculis...»
- 32 - Present-day Morocco.
- 33 - Whom one should not confuse with his brother-in-law Hasdrubal «the Fair» deceased in 221.
- 34 - Major city and Carthaginian naval base. Present-day Marsala, western Sicily.
- 35 - The alleged superiority of which should be relativized, as a simple ship count from the naval operations cited by the Elders, demonstrates that the naval forces of the belligerents were roughly equivalent.
- 36 - For fast and efficient communication, the Carthaginian troops used a system equivalent to Morse code : with the help of small flags representing, in the left hand, the fifths of letters and in the right hand, the letters themselves. Polybius alluded to this system (X, 7).
- 37 - Hannibal, Fayard, 1995
- 38 - Polybius, II, 24, 15 -17
- 39 - Livy XXI, 17
- 40 - The question of military strength will be treated in the chapter concerning the Battle of the Trebia.
- 41 - Polybius, II, 24, 3 and s.
- 42 - Polybius, II, 24, 5 to 9. Polybius omitted citing the cavalry of the Umbrians, the Sarsinates, the Veneti and the Cenomani.

- 43 - Added to which the slaves and convicts, mobilized in extreme urgency after Cannae.
- 44 - The father of the future «African».
- 45 - Hanno, son of Bomilcar
- 46 - Polybius III, 33, 18
- 47 - Probably the confluence of the Durance, as the confluence of the Isère is too far away to have been reached in four days, taking into account that the cavalry detachment that had left from the same point to outflank the Gauls, took three days to go back and forth. As for the island, cited by Polybius, its configuration is the same at the level of both confluences.
- 48 - See adjacent insert.
- 49 - Livy, XXI, 35, 8-9
- 50 - "Did York prof find Hannibal's route through the Alps ?" (<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2016/04/06/did-york-prof-find-hannibals-route-through-the-alps.html>)
- 51 - Modern Piacenza.
- 52 - Casteggio.
- 53 - Rimini.
- 54 - Yozan D. Mosig and Imene Belhassen. Revision and Reconstruction in the Second Punic War : Cannae revisited. The International Journal of the Humanities, volume IV, 2006.
- 55 - Polybius, II, 24, 15 -17
- 56 - Polybius II, 24, 3 and more.
- 57 - Polybius III, 84,7 and III, 85,1.
- 58 - Appian in «Hannibalic War», chapter II, 8. Moreover, Appian was particularly precise about certain figures. For example, regarding Carthage's military port, his estimate of 220 dry docks is singularly accurate. Cf in annex, the article about the military port of Carthage.
- 59 - Book X, 6, 7 and Book X, 9,6
- 60 - Book XXI, 55.
- 61 - Probably in between 15,000 and 30,000 men according to the «qualifier» of legions - traditional or reinforced – which was used at the Trebia.
- 62 - Book III, 72, 11.
- 63 - Book III, 72, 12
- 64 - Book III, 72, 2
- 65 - Book III, 72, 7 to 9
- 66 - At the Battle of Cannae, the underestimation of forces is even more staggering, because of the presence of eight Roman legions. Indeed, in traditional legions, the total should add up to 108,000 men whereas Polybius mentions only 87,000 soldiers. In terms of reinforced legions, the forces should be at least of 120,000 foot soldiers and 12,000 or even 16,000 cavalrymen.
- 67 - Probably more than 40,000 foot soldiers and 6,000 cavalry.
- 68 - Appian mentioned 13 legions of 15,000 men and cavalry which amounted to global forces of 195,000 men and cavalry.
- 69 - This Gaul thus avenged his companions who were annihilated by Flaminius on the banks of the Adda in 223.
- 70 - This figure communicated by Polybius confirms Rome's use of reinforced legions of more than 2,000 cavalrymen. Thus, having available double the numbers (a consular army counting two legions) Servilius sent Flaminius the essential part of his cavalry.
- 71 - VI, 557 Silius Italicus.
- 72 - To prevent Hannibal from occupying them in case of a siege, thus blocking the chain of supply by internal waterways.
- 73 - A man of character, a placid personage who was a conservative and an adversary of Flaminius. Fabius was hostile to the politics of expansion advocated by the Aemilia and the Cornelia patrician families, and had advised against waging war at Trasimene. Which was why he was appointed as dictator with unrestricted authority, for six months. Fabius was an excellent tactician, since he had understood that Hannibal was tactically unbeatable and that they should allow time for the Carthaginian army to exhaust itself in squirmishes, far from its bases.
- 74 - The mobilized Roman forces amounted to 250,000 men, among which 40,000 cavalry.
- 75 - XXII, 46, 4.
- 76 - The Delayer
- 77 - Today's Capua.
- 78 - To be more precise : the territories of the Hirpini, the Campanian, the Samnite, the Paelignian and the Frentani.
- 79 - Puglia, ancient Apulia.
- 80 - Main town Larino.
- 81 - With equal power as the consul and no accountability to him, the praetor swore the same oath, on the same day and held the same power. He was elected for a year by the Comitia Centuriata. He was a kind of «extraordinary consul» charged chiefly with the administration of civil justice and the governing of provinces.
- 82 - These two legions would be totally destroyed by the next spring, at the Battle of Silva Litana. (Livy, XXIII, 24). See note, infra.

- 83 - Rumor spread by Hannibal's spies ?
- 84 - Now Ofanto River.
- 85 - Cannae, between Canosa and Barletta, which controlled the territory of Canusium.
- 86 - As was argued by Pr. Yozan Mosig, the thesis of a Roman cavalry inferior in numbers does not withstand scrutiny. Indeed, for what reason would Rome have been unable to align as many cavalrymen as the enemy, if not more ? No objective reason was found to convince us of this.
- 87 - At that period in the summer the Aufidus was practically running dry and lent itself easily to passage.
- 88 - In Roman tradition, the commandment of the army alternated each day between the two consuls. According to Polybius, on the 2nd of August Varro commanded the army. This was called into question by Seibert, quoted by Y. D. Mosig, who claimed that Aemilius Paullus was in command on that day, because it was traditional for the commander of the Roman cavalry to also command the whole army. The historian Polybius, in the service of Scipio Aemilianus, may have falsified history so as not to reflect the shame of defeat on the family of his master, of whom Aemilius Paullus was the grandfather.
- 89 - Polybius, XV, 11, 8.
- 90 - Such a huge number of foot soldiers had never been thus gathered before. Hannibal scrutinized the spaces separating the men and understood that once they were carried away in the thrill of battle, this huge mass' power to maneuver would be strongly limited by the dominant force of inertia.
- 91 - With alternating units of Gauls and Iberians, to prevent group collusion.
- 92 - They may even have been placed with their backs to the enemy to perfect their disguise.
- 93 - On the battlefield, Hannibal himself was in command of the center.
- 94 - «*It can be argued that what did the Romans in was, above all, their elitism. Hannibal knew that the Roman nobility would ride on the right, and not together with their "lesser" peers, the Italian allies. If the Romans had divided their total cavalry into two equal forces, deployed on either side of the field, the outcome of the battle might have been quite different. But they predictably placed the smaller elite Roman force on the right, and Hannibal was able to deploy against them the heavy Celtic and Iberian horse under Hasdrubal, outnumbering them by more than two to one, and practically assuring victory on that side.*» Revision and Reconstruction of the Battles of Cannae and Zama by Yozan D. Mosig and Imene Belhassen. University of Nebraska at Kearney.
- 95 - Intended in the Roman battle plan to prevent the Carthaginians from retreating to their camp.
- 96 - Modern Canosa.
- 97 - Region which was very densely populated with Latins.
- 98 - Livy, XXII, 58, 3.
- 99 - Jean-Pierre Brisson, «Hannibal» article, encyclopedia «Les Africains», Editions du Jaguar.
- 100 - The capture of Sicily, then Sardinia and Corsica.
- 101 - By strengthening the defense of cities that had pledged their support, or by implementing a bridgehead between Carthage and Italy.
- 102 - See the text of the Carthaginian-Macedonian Treaty, probably written by the hand of Hannibal in person. Polybius, Book VII, fragment III.
- 103 - Between 200,000 and 250,000 dead, without counting the wounded. It was practically 10% of the total population of Italy.
- 104 - The number of soldiers killed in the last battles was so huge that there were funerals in all families.
- 105 - The Marsi were a tribe of ancient Italy who lived on the Apennines, between Sabina (Sabines) and Samnium (Samnites). They were tough and enduring mountain dwellers.
- 106 - Modern Teano.
- 107 - Livy, XXIII, 18, 10-15.
- 108 - Seven km to the northeast of Aceriae. (Today's Acerra)
- 109 - Hanno, named «the Great» by the Romans, implacable political enemy of the Barcids.
- 110 - Guadalquivir
- 111 - Carthaginian citizens born in Syracuse, the brothers Hippocrates and Epicydes were long-time combatants in Hannibal's army.
- 112 - The consuls had had the wisdom of separating the command of army and navy : one of them commanded the army, the other the navy, to avoid alternating commandment.
- 113 - Polybius, VIII, (II), 3, 2-3.
- 114 - Polybius, VIII, (II), 4, 2....
- 115 - If the device needed so many quinqueremes, the sambuca exceeded 100 meters in length.
- 116 - Modern Taormina.
- 117 - Netum or Neetum (Greek : Νέητον) ancient town in the south of Sicily, near the sources of the little river Asinarus (modern Falconara), and about 34 km southwest of Syracuse. Its current site is at the locality of Noto Antica (formerly Noto Vecchio), in the modern commune of Noto.
- 118 - Lepanto.
- 119 - "History of Rome", Theodor Mommsen.
- 120 - Close to Seville, modern Estepa, its inhabitants torched their homes and killed themselves rather than be overrun by the Romans.
- 121 - His territory extended to the provinces of Oran and Algiers.
- 122 - King of the province of Constantine.
- 123 - Calatia is an ancient town of Campania located 10 km to the southeast of Capua, on the Appian Way.

- 124 - At the place where he had come closest to the enclosure, the second milestone on the Appian Way, when leaving by the Porta Capena gate.
- 125 - In 210, the revolt of Salapia had already cost him 500 elite Numidian cavalrymen.
- 126 - Hasdrubal had gone to Africa to curb Syphax' attacks against Carthage.
- 127 - Measure of weight equivalent to roughly 26 kg of silver coins (with a required quality of silver of 95% minimum). 3000 talents were worth 78 tons of silver.
- 128 - With Fabius Pictor, one of the two first Roman historians ; he would be made prisoner by Hannibal.
- 129 - Three supervisors conjointly responsible for monitoring administrative departments.
- 130 - More than 350,000 men.
- 131 - As it was always the case when Hannibal had other objectives than combat, this move was reported by his enemies as an evasion or even a defeat. Scipio Africanus would excel at this practice.
- 132 - A reasonable estimate of the forces amassed against those of Hasdrubal, considering only new conscripts and the merging of the two consular armies, would amount to, according to the most conservative assumption, forces of 120,000 men. Hasdrubal probably fought one against four.
- 133 - Today's Capo Colonna.
- 134 - 30 quinqueremes and 15,000 men.
- 135 - 30,000 to nearly 38,000 men according to the authors, which amply corroborates our thesis about the strength of the famous «reinforced legions».
- 136 - Present-day Cape Farina, known as Cape of Apollo in Antiquity.
- 137 - Polybius seldom alluded to her. Sources concerning her were of a later date (Livy, Appian and Plutarch).
- 138 - Present-day Kalāat el-Andalous.
- 139 - Polybius, XIV, 5, 15.
- 140 - Souk El Arba ?
- 141 - Weight measure equivalent to roughly 26 kg of silver coins (with a required quality of silver of 95% minimum). 5,000 talents were equivalent to 130 tons of silver.
- 142 - Leptis Minor (modern Lamta)
- 143 - Present-day Medjerda river.
- 144 - In the same way as for the vessels' incident, there is no logical explanation for this development of events.
- 145 - To the west of El Kef, near Ras Djaber.
- 146 - Polybius, XV, 6, 4.
- 147 - Regarding the battle in general : «The Trouble with Zama : Paradox, Smoke and Mirrors in an Ancient Battlefield» by Yozan Mosig, The History Herald, 19 December 2012.
- 148 - There are a number of «Zamas». That of the region of Siliana, called Jama is the one most quoted by experts, however, there is no certainty as to the exact location of the battle.
- 149 - P. Cornelius Scipio, died in 170, son of Scipio Africanus and his cousin and brother-in-law P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica Corculum, prince of the Senate in 147.
- 150 - See Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet, «*Histoire et politique à Rome, les historiens romains (IIIe av.J.-C. - Ve ap. J.-C.)*». Bréal 2001, page 60.
- 151 - Sosylos wrote a biography of Hannibal in seven volumes. An extant papyrus proves the very great interest of this work. It narrates the Ebro naval battle in 217.
- 152 - Perhaps four biographies, because the Ancients also alluded to Sulpicius Blitho and Chaireas.
- 153 - Quintus Fabius Pictor (254-201), Roman senator and historian in Greek language. Cousin of Fabius Maximus. Survivor of the Trasimene Battle. He was appointed to travel to the oracle at Delphi after the defeat at Cannae, to seek to appease the gods' anger. He wrote a history of Rome in Greek with the purpose of defending Roman policies, while Hannibal was on the point of disbanding the Confederation.
- 154 - Lucius Cincius Alimentus (240-190), Roman senator and historian in Greek language. Propraetor of Sicily in 209-208, he assumed command of two legions. He would be made prisoner by Hannibal who treated him with particular respect, which would enable him to assist as a privileged witness to the confrontation between Rome and Carthage. He would remember that in his historical writings.
- 155 - Only insignificant fragments survive about the history that concerns us most directly.
- 156 - Serge Lancel quoting Suetonius.
- 157 - Domitian was one of the worst emperors in the history of Rome, however, this anecdote is significant. It should also be mentioned that four centuries after the Second Punic war, Septimius Severus would see his imperium considered by his opponents as «Hannibal's revenge».
- 158 - The war in Spain also suffered from these inconsistencies.
- 159 - The Trouble With Zama : Paradox, Smoke and Mirrors in an Ancient Battlefield, 19 December 2012, By Yozan Mosig (<http://www.thehistoryherald.com>)
- 160 - See Ferjaoui Ahmed. *Localization of Zama Regia at Jama*. In : Comptes-rendus des séances de l'année... - Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 146e année, N. 3, 2002. pp. 1003-1017.
- 161 - H.R. Hurst, Excavations at Carthage : The British Mission - The Circular Harbour, North Side - The Site and Finds Other Than Pottery, Vol. 2
- 162 - Polybius, XV, 18, 3.
- 163 - «They had long ago made up their minds to act thus, but they were looking for a suitable opportunity

- and a pretext that would appeal to foreign nations.»..Polybius, XXXVI,2
164 - Polybius, XV, 18, 4.
165 - Region of Bousalem.
166 - Region of Makthar
167 - Appian of Alexandria, Roman history, VIII, 96
168 - Hurst deducts a total of 170 docks on the circumference, and for the 50 remaining docks, he suggests diverse solutions, among which the existence of longer docks, likely to contain two ships one behind the other, in the same manner as the 18 docks out of the 30 on the island, whose length was close to, or beyond 50 meters.
169 - «Les dossiers d'Archéologie», (vol. 183, p. 42-51). A similar conclusion to that of Hurst's has been drawn during a dig by an American team, to date a dock on one of the sides of the Rectangular Port. (American School of Oriental Research; Strager 1978)
170 - The military port and the merchant port)
171 - Destroying Carthage was an intention «they had long made up their minds to (...), but they were looking for a suitable opportunity and a pretext that would appeal to foreign nations. For the Romans very rightly paid great attention to this matter...». Polybius, XXXVI,2
172 - And at least five other towns.
173 - Alicante.
174 - Cartagena.
175 - Bursa.
176 - Artashat.
177 - "Le port militaire de Carthage", Henry Hurst, Marine Antique, Les Dossiers d'Archéologie, n°183, juin 1993
178 - Cornelius Nepos «Lives of Eminent Commanders»
179 - Dr Mosig, Y., & Belhassen, I. (2007). Revision and Reconstruction in the Second Punic War : Zama-Whose Victory ? The International Journal of the Humanities, 5 (9), 175-186.
180 - Cato was sent as quaestor (financial comptroller) to Sicily where Scipio was preparing his departure for Africa. Observing him spending all his time at the theater and in the gymnasium, while handsomely paying his soldiers and spending money recklessly, he returned to Rome to denounce his excesses.
181- Indeed, to this day, no army in the world has lost such a great number of soldiers in a single day.
182 - Before Syphax married Sophonisba and returned to the Carthaginian fold.
183 - However, as we have already seen, these reinforcements had been diverted to Spain.
184 - Livy, XXVIII, 17, 7.
185 - Livy, XXVIII, 17, 15.
186 - Livy, XXVIII, 17-18.
187 - Livy, XXX, 28, 3
188 - The Carthaginian delegation sent in 203 to negotiate the peace treaty reportedly spoke of Hannibal in these terms : «*He had no orders from their senate to cross the Ebro, much less the Alps. It was on his own authority that he had made war not only on Rome but even on Saguntum.*» Livy, XXX, 22.
189 - Livy, XXX, 20.
190 - Noteworthy is the fact that in 190, during the war against Antiochus, Scipio would be accused of having been paid by the Seleucid king to negotiate a peace favorable to him.
191 - The historical parallel with the end of the First Punic War is edifying. It was not the first time that the Barcidcs were challenged by the oligarchs' alacrity to sign a peace treaty with Rome.
192 - Reformers were supported by the People's Assembly.
193 - Alicante
194 - And the Balearic Islands.
195 - Polybius, XV, 4, 8.
196 - Livy, XXX,24.
197 - Livy, XXX, 24, 5.
198 - Livy, XXX, 24, 6..
199 - Livy, XXX, 21, 2...
200 - Livy, XXX, 27.
201 - Livy, XXX, 36,2.
202 - The tribune of the plebs prevented all high-ranking Roman officials from joining Scipio in Africa.
203 - Livy, XXX, 28.
204 - Livy, XXX, 28, 3. In Livy's description, «*Scipio has not to do with Syphax, whose subjects are undisciplined barbarians and whose army was generally led by Statorius, who was little more than a camp menial, nor with Syphax's elusive father-in-law, Hasdrubal nor with a half-armed mob of peasants hastily collected from the fields.*»
205 - Polybius, XV, 4, 1, 2.
206 - Polybius, XV, 5, 1.
207 - Polybius, XV, 5, 2.
208 - Present-day Sousse.
209 - Modern Zembra.
210 - Near modern Korbous.

211 - The presence of this clause in the treaty of 201 is uncustomary. Why did Scipio mention a special compensation when it could have been added to the general financial clause ?

212 - Did the reform of the post of commander-in-chief open legal loopholes in the Constitution of Carthage ?

213 - Scipio's many lies, the absence of high-ranking Roman officials at his side, his utter inversions of truth in the face of his compatriots themselves, cannot exclude the hypothesis of downright manipulation on his part.

214 - The books from I to XXIX of the «Histories» mainly relate the history of the Second Punic War. Written by Polybius between 167 and 151, they were thoroughly emended after the destruction of Carthage.

215 - In 189, Scipio Africanus' brother Lucius Cornelius Scipio obtained a more spectacularly celebrated triumph according to Livy (XXXVII, 59,2) following the victory against Antiochus, although through lack of confidence, effective command was not granted to him.

216 - In 185 in the Roman Senate, two tribunes accused Scipio and his brother Lucius of the misappropriation of sums paid by Antiochus, as well as embezzling spoils made during the war. The tribunes called for an investigation and demanded accountability. Defiantly, Scipio brandished the general accounts ledger claiming that it was in good standing, but refused to give it back and tore it up in the middle of the Senate.

217 - According to the Ancients, the Second Punic War was «Hannibal's War».

218 - 10,000 Euboic talents were equivalent to 260 tons of silver coins with a purity of 95%.

219 - Livy, XXXIII, 45, 5.

220 - Livy, XXXIV, 62, 2.

221 - Polybius, XXXI, 21.

222 - Polybius, XXXI, 21, 3, 4.

223 - Polybius, XXXI, 21, 6.

224 - In 200, in the north of Italy a general uprising of the Gauls was executed *«under the command of Hamilcar, a Carthaginian, who, having been in the army of Hasdrubal, had remained in those parts...»* Livy, XXXI, 10, 2.

225 - This last intention was proved by the dating of the port.

226 - And before him, against his father.

227 - The army being of Barcid allegiance, it is quite probable that after Hannibal's leave-taking, the oligarchs attempted everything to control it. The beginning of Masinissa's incursions during the very year of Hannibal's departure, corroborate this.

228 - Kerkennah Islands.

229 - Modern Tyre.

230 - When the city was attacked by Alexander the Great, the Tyrians sought refuge in Carthage.

231 - His daughter was the first of a long line of Cleopatras, among whom the last was the most famous.

232 - Both located in Asia, in the «natural» territory of the Seleucid empire.

233 - Balkan Peninsula.

234 - Livy, XXXIV, 61, 1.

235 - Today's Vjosa in Albania.

236 - The Ancients categorized warships by «banks of oarsmen». There were thus in the classic navy triremes, quadriremes, quinqueremes, hexaremes and septiremes, etc. Larger polyremes existed, especially in the fleet of Ptolemy II of Egypt, who had a «thirty». By trireme, quinquereme, etc, it must not be understood that there were 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 decks of oars. If the trireme for example had three banks of oars, an oarsman at each oar, the quinquereme also had three banks of oars, the oars in the top two banks being rowed by pairs of oarsmen and the oars in the bottom bank being rowed by a single oarsman.

237 - Who reportedly had as sources : «The History of Hannibal» by Sosylus and other narratives such as «Histories of Hannibal» by Silenus or by Sulpicius Blitho.

238 - Former general of Antiochus.

239 - Modern Artashat.

240 - Cornelius Nepos, «Lives of Eminent Commanders», Hannibal, XI.

241 - The fourth-most populous city in Turkey, Bursa is one of the industrial hubs of the country as well as an important cultural center.

242 - Present-day Alicante.

243 - Present-day Cartagena.

244 - Present-day Artashat.

245 - «This great man, though occupied in such vast military operations, devoted some portion of his time to literature; for there are some books of his written in the Greek language, and amongst them one addressed to the Rhodians on the acts of Cnaeus Manlius Vulso in Asia.» Cornelius Nepos, «Lives of Eminent Commanders», Hannibal, XIII.

246 - According to some authors, he was betrayed by Prusias' son, who wanted to take advantage of his father's illness to gratify Flamininus.

247 - Belkhdja Tahar, *Les trois décennies Bourguiba*, Paris, Arcantère Publisud, 1998

APPENDIX

The Road to Zama: The Heroization of Scipio and the Betrayal of Massinissa

By Yozan Mosig

The battle of Zama, supposedly waged in North Africa in 202 BCE, between the armies of Hannibal Barca and the Roman general Publius Cornelius Scipio, was the final military engagement of the Second Punic War, and a decisive turning point in the history of the Mediterranean cultures and the rest of the world. The traditional accounts of the battle, based practically in their entirety on pro-Roman sources, paint a strange and highly unlikely picture of the conflict and its outcome. Let us first examine the reasons for the distortions presented by the classical record, and the circumstances leading up to the battle. In a following article I will attempt to reconstruct what actually happened on that fateful day, looking through what can only be characterized as smoke and mirrors in the standard sources.

To understand what took place in 202 BCE at Zama—not the name of the actual locality of the engagement, but the label most easily recognized—and the reasons why the records of the event were presented in the manner in which they have been preserved, it is necessary to go back to 216, the year of the greatest defeat in the history of Roman military power, the battle of Cannae. Only by taking into account Hannibal's victories at the Trebia (in 218), Trasimene (in 217), and especially Cannae, can we gain a measure of the magnitude of the humiliation Rome experienced at the hands of the great Carthaginian hero, who remained undefeated on Italian soil for 15 years. We can then comprehend the psychological and political need to build up the image of a Roman counter-hero, Scipio Africanus, and to exaggerate and distort the account of Zama by presenting it as a Cannae in reverse. The descriptions of Cannae and Zama in Roman historiography offer a curious reciprocal contrast, as will be seen below.

At Cannae, in 216 BCE, Hannibal was able to field 40,000 infantry plus 10,000 cavalry to face a vastly numerically superior Roman force under Lucius Aemilius Paulus and Gaius Terentius Varro, numbering 80,000 infantry and close to, or actually well over, 10,000 horse (not merely 6,000, as usually claimed—see Mosig & Belhassen, 2006). Hannibal, through his brilliant battlefield tactics, managed to destroy the Roman horse early in the engagement and totally encircle the huge infantry force, achieving within a few hours the annihilation of the largest army Rome had ever assembled.

This terrible defeat was not only a severe blow to the military might of Rome; it was an affront to Roman arrogance and pride. The description of the battle of Cannae in Roman historiography was influenced primarily by the accounts of Polybius—who, although Greek, was in the employ of the Cornelian family—and Livy, a patriotic Roman propagandist. The reports of Polybius, Livy, and other pro-Roman historians distort the events at Cannae in several ways (detailed in Mosig & Belhassen, 2006). One claim was that, although the Romans had a two-

to one advantage in infantry, Hannibal had almost a two to one superiority in cavalry, and that the numerically superior horse was the deciding factor in the disaster. Polybius astutely gives the size of the Roman horse as “over 6000,” which is not technically false, although clearly misleading, since the actual figure was probably close to twice that number. A force of 10,000 to 12,000 horse and 80,000 foot soldiers allows for the total Roman deployment to exceed 90,000. With 10,000 survivors plus 10,000 captured 90,000 is consistent with Polybius’s reported casualty figure of 70,000. Livy, on the other hand, following Polybius’s “6,000” number for the Roman horse, sees the total strength as 86,000, and gives a much lower number for the Roman fallen, 50,000. By the creation of a fictional numerical superiority in the Carthaginian horse and the sharp reduction of the Roman dead, the greatest shame of Roman arms was substantially diminished (Mosig & Belhassen, 2006).

Additionally, Roman pride, which had rationalized the defeats at the Trebia and at Lake Trasimene as the results of ambushes rather than “fair” engagements, needed some excuse to explain how they had been crushed on an open plain at Cannae, where no ambush could be concealed. To that end, Livy reports a spurious incident (not mentioned by Polybius) of treacherous trickery, fitting his portrayal of Hannibal (21:4) as possessing “*inhuman cruelty*” (inhumana crudelitas) and “*no regard for truth*” (nihil veri), as well as the standard Roman stereotype of Carthaginian perfidy and “*Punic faith*.” A contingent of 500 apparently unarmed Numidians allegedly pretended to defect and then attacked the Romans from behind with weapons hidden in their clothes (22:48). It seems that vanity demanded that only through treachery and overwhelming cavalry superiority could the “*noble*” Romans have been defeated!

But wounded Roman arrogance needed more than fabricated lower casualty figures, inflated enemy numbers, and imagined trickery to alleviate the incurred disgrace. The Romans needed a hero behind whom they could rally, a greater-than-life figure to restore lost confidence, infuse new pride, and, above all, to counteract the image of the apparently invincible Hannibal, Rome’s worst nightmare. They also desperately needed a great victory, comparable to Cannae, to erase their dishonor. The heroization, deification, and hagiography of Publio Cornelius Scipio the Younger, later known as Scipio Africanus, provided the Romans with a legend to accomplish the former, while the exaggerated and distorted accounts of the battle of Zama supplied the illusion that a reverse Cannae had been achieved. We will examine below both of these developments.

A number of ancient sources provide information allowing us to follow the creation of the legend and apotheosis of Scipio Africanus. Besides Polybius (who regarded him as a hero, but had reservations concerning his character) and Livy, Haywood (1933) mentions support for the idolizing of Scipio in reports by Appian, Lactantius, Ennius, Cicero, Oppius, Hyginus, Valerius Maximus, Gellius, Nepos, and others. Members of the Cornelian family, as could be expected, “*were united in believing Africanus one of the greatest men of history. Ennius and others had considered him more than a man*” (Haywood 28-29).

The earliest expression of the heroization of Scipio in Roman historiography seems to be the incident that supposedly took place during the cavalry engagement at the Ticinus river, in 218 BCE, the first clash between Punic and Roman forces after Hannibal's epic crossing of the Alps. There, Scipio's father, the commanding consul, was seriously wounded, and was supposedly saved by the bravery of his son, the future Africanus (Livy 21:46, 9-10), who was at the time barely 18 years old. Nevertheless, according to Coelius Antipater, “*the honor of saving the consul should be credited to a Ligurian slave [rather than to the young Scipio].*” Livy actually says “*servati consulis decus Coelius ad servum natione Ligurem delegat*” (21:46, 10), while expressing a preference for the version attributing the act to the young hero. The Ligurian slave is also mentioned in Macrobius’s Saturnalia (1:11, 26), but the more popular account, giving Scipio as the savior, is found in Appian, Hannibalic War, 7; Valerius Maximus 5:4, 2; Floros 2:6, 10; Silius Italicus 4, 417-479, Orosius 4:14; 6; and Zonaras 8:23, 9. Polybius does not mention the incident in his description of the battle of the Ticinus, but includes Scipio’s presumed heroism much later, attributing the information to Scipio’s friend Laelius, hardly an unbiased source. As Lancel (1998) points out, “*in his laudatory portrait of his hero leaving to conquer Punic Spain in 210 claims that the young man had single handedly saved his father, who was hemmed in by the enemy, while his companions hesitated in the face of danger [...]. This narrative smacks of the hagiography that very soon developed around the figure of Africanus, doubtless with the complicity of the interested party.*”

Beck & Walter (2004) also comment on the discrepancy between Coelius Antipater’s description of the incident and the version favored by the mainstream of Roman historiography: “*The intention to decorate the young P. Cornelius Scipio with the heroic deed from the Ticinus goes deeper than a mere attempt to express his virtus. Polybius and afterwards Livy were much more interested in portraying him as a man who, from the very beginning of the war till the victory at Zama, struggled tirelessly against Hannibal. Coelius was unencumbered by that intention.*”

If Scipio actually was at the Ticinus, he must have been at the battle of the Trebia as well, (also in 218 BCE), but there is no mention in any of the sources indicating either his presence or his participation in the first major engagement of the war, where Hannibal crushed the combined armies of Scipio’s wounded father and of Sempronius Longus, the other consul of that fateful year. Clearly, if the young Scipio was there, he did nothing to distinguish himself.

Scipio, supposedly, was also at Cannae, but, as Ridley (1975) points out, he is not mentioned by either Livy or Polybius in their descriptions of the battle. Nevertheless, Livy (22:50-52) lists his name as one of four military tribunes among the survivors who escaped from the debacle. Livy, but not Polybius, includes also an anecdote consistent with the hagiography of the hero, in which allegedly Scipio confronts M. Caecilius Metellus, who, together with others, is planning to leave Italy altogether, believing the situation to be hopeless, and forces him and his followers, at sword point, to take an oath to Jupiter invoking their personal destruction should they abandon Rome (22:54). The incident is

suspect as a further fiction to enhance the growing legend. Scullard (1930) argues that “*this story is probably a late invention, otherwise Polybius would hardly have omitted it.*”

It is interesting to note that the Romans disdained those who allowed themselves to be captured at Cannae, whom they branded as cowards, and refused to ransom them; as a consequence they were sold into slavery. Disdain was only slightly less for those who had survived the battle by escaping, and they were also disgraced and labeled cowards, since to save themselves they had fled the battlefield rather than dying with honor (Livy 22:49-60). They were punished by being forced to serve indefinitely in Sicily without pay. On the other hand, escape from the Roman camp to avoid capture, rather than from the battlefield, was not similarly stigmatized. Naturally, if Scipio was at Cannae, as Livy implies, had he survived by escaping from the battlefield, by Roman standards he should also have been regarded as a coward and his reputation tainted accordingly—but no mention is made of it. If he was in the camp and did not see action other than escaping in the middle of the night, there was also no glory in that alternative. Similarly, Ridley (1975) argues that “*if, as seems likely, Scipio actually fought at Cannae, then here indeed is a hitherto neglected, albeit negative, element in the Scipionic legend: the studious avoidance of any direct statement by any of our sources to this effect. The dramatic contrast of Scipio’s presence at Rome’s greatest humiliation at Hannibal’s hands with his ultimate turning of the tables at Zama, would seem to have been appealing [...] Scipio’s part in [the battle of Cannae], apparently undistinguished, has been expunged from history.*”

It is clear that Scipio’s involvement in the three Roman defeats at which he was probably present—Ticinus, Trebia, Cannae—was undistinguished at best. However, there is little doubt that he carefully studied Hannibal’s tactics, and that he was a good student, as demonstrated by his Iberian campaign, where his victories against less competent Carthaginian commanders were made possible by tactical maneuvers derived from Hannibal.

The brazen attack on Cartagena in 209 BCE, while the Punic armies were away, was successful largely due to luck and Scipio’s discovery of the shallowness of the ebbing waters protecting one side of the city (Livy 26:41-51). As Polybius (10:2) reports, he tried to exploit the situation to convince his soldiers that he was under divine protection and had a special connection to the gods, especially Neptune. There is no doubt that he was a shrewd and clever manipulator of people, and in this and other instances did not hesitate to use the opportunity to build up his own image. He later allowed himself to be seen as a mystic and a favorite of Jupiter, fomenting the growth of his own legend.

Although as a politician he may have approached greatness—at least in a Machiavellian sense—as a military commander he was competent but not brilliant, certainly not a genius of the caliber of Alexander or Hannibal, Liddell Hart (1927) to the contrary. His main victories in Spain—at Baecula in 208 and Ilipa in 206 BCE—reflect his adoption of Hannibalic tactics, especially the withdrawn center, which is not to say that his maneuvers showed a complete lack

of originality.

The battle of Baecula, despite being hailed as a great victory by pro-Roman historians, was actually a disaster, if the intention was to block Hasdrubal, Hannibal's brother, from continuing north to cross the Alps and join the latter's forces in Italy. Scipio failed, and although he "won" the battle, Hasdrubal was able to escape with most of his army intact and proceed north for his rendezvous with destiny (Polybius 10:38; Livy 27:18). This failure could have cost the Romans the war, for had Hasdrubal succeeded in reinforcing Hannibal in Italy, the combined Punic forces under the command of the undefeated Carthaginian maverick would in all likelihood have proven unstoppable. Hasdrubal's defeat at the Metaurus before he could reach his brother saved the city on the Tiber from certain disaster, an event which owed nothing to Scipio and a lot to luck: the interception of Hasdrubal's messengers attempting to reach Hannibal to arrange for the meeting of the two Carthaginian armies (Livy 27:43).

Nevertheless, since the following battle, at Ilipa (206 BCE), effectively ended Carthaginian control of Spain, Scipio returned to Rome a hero, was elected consul in 205, and became proconsul the following year, retaining his command in Sicily. Hannibal, although remaining undefeated after 14 years of war, by 204 was limited in his operations to Bruttium, the tip of the Italian peninsula. The Fabians (one of the main families of the Roman nobility, the others being the Cornelians and the Claudians) in the Roman senate urged action, including the venerable Fabius Maximus, who had exhibited the wisdom of not engaging Hannibal after the Roman debacle at Lake Trasimene in 217 BCE, waging instead a war of attrition, a tactic which, when discontinued after the conclusion of his term in office, led to Cannae. With Hannibal's weary and much diminished army hemmed in at the tip of the peninsula, Scipio was urged to lead the Roman legions on a final battle to defeat the Carthaginian general once and for all (Livy 28:38-45). Scipio refused, insisting instead on taking the war to Carthage, and the invasion of Africa started in 204 BCE.

Although he would have to face Carthaginian armies on their own land, where they could be resupplied without difficulties and would outnumber him, Scipio knew that they did not have another Hannibal among them, and judging from his experience with the less than gifted Carthaginian commanders in Spain he expected to have a better chance of success than facing the remnants of the army of the formidable Hannibal in Italy. Moreover, if he were to achieve success in Africa, he might accomplish the recall of Hannibal from Italy to defend his home city, in which case the great Barcid would arrive without a substantial part of his current forces, especially his much-feared cavalry, due to Roman control of the Mediterranean impeding easy transport of supplies and reinforcements by the enemy. Dodge (1891) perceptively comments: "*Scipio did no more for Italy than Marcellus [conqueror of Syracuse], less than Nero [victor at the Metaurus], but he has descended into history as a greater character than either. Less able in many respects, his work was supplemented by opportunities not awarded them, and what he did bore fruit which all men could see. Scipio never hid his light under a bushel. Had Scipio*

faced Hannibal when Marcellus or Nero was called on to do so, he would probably have failed. Fortune saved him for Zama, when Hannibal had no longer an army and he himself had inherited the best of its size Rome had put into the field."

Scipio had another reason to avoid fighting Hannibal in Italy, in addition to fear of suffering a crushing defeat at the hands of the master. He had been courting Massinissa, a Numidian prince and master of the horse, son of Gaia, king of the Maessylili, whose help and cavalry would be available to him in Africa, but not in Italy. Earlier, Syphax, Numidian king of the Masaessylili, had been persuaded by Scipio's father and uncle to join the Roman cause, while the brothers were commanding the Roman forces in Spain. His defection hurt Carthaginian efforts, dependent as they were on Numidian cavalry. Hasdrubal, Hannibal's brother, had combined his forces with those of King Gaia, under the command of Massinissa, who had remained loyal to Carthage, and inflicted two crushing defeats on Syphax. Massinissa was also cavalry commander for the Carthaginian army that in 211 BCE defeated the army of Scipio's father, Publius Cornelius Scipio the Elder, who was killed in the engagement (Polybius 9:22; Livy 25:32-34).

After Baecula, in 208 BCE, Massinissa, still loyal to the Carthaginians, retreated south toward Gades. Scipio had crossed to Africa to visit the court of King Syphax and negotiate his continued support of Rome, and apparently charmed the king with his eloquence, despite the presence of the enemy Carthaginian general, Hasdrubal Gisco. Back in Gades, he wooed Massinissa, who, as de Beer (1969) puts it, "*also fell under the spell of Scipio's charm*" and signed a treaty with him (Livy 28:35). This act of Massinissa, amounting to a betrayal of his loyalty to Hannibal and Carthage, would have a momentous effect on the outcome of the war. Clearly, Scipio's skill as politician surpassed his talent as battlefield commander.

While Massinissa was still in Spain, his father died, and the succession to the throne of the Maessylili resulted in conflict and civil war, with Mazaetullus usurping power and marrying the Carthaginian widow of the dead king in order to ally himself with Carthage. Massinissa returned to Africa and fought successfully to regain his kingdom, but this put him at odds with Syphax, the king of the Masaessylili, who had supported his rivals for the throne. This time Massinissa was defeated in battle, but managed to escape and hide in the mountains to avoid capture and death. He was able to raise a new army from his supporters, but was defeated once more by his enemy. Massinissa was expecting Scipio's arrival in Africa, planning to use the opportunity to defeat his adversary, but Scipio's delays with the invasion cost him dearly (Livy 29).

To seal Syphax's support of Carthage, Hasdrubal Gisco gave the aging king, in marriage, his beautiful daughter Sophonisba, who had also been courted by Massinissa, upon which Syphax sent Scipio a message warning him not to invade Africa, for the king would now be on the Carthaginian side.

Scipio proceeded with the invasion anyway, and landed at Cape Farina, near Utica, in the spring of 204 (Livy 29:27, 5-12), with an army of at least 30,000

men. He was joined there by the Numidian horse under Massinissa, who defeated a small cavalry force under Hanno that had been sent from Carthage to meet the invaders, Hanno himself being killed in the engagement.

Scipio laid siege to Utica (Ityke), but was unable to take it. Meanwhile, Hasdrubal Gisgo, together with his ally Syphax, assembled an army and marched against Scipio's position. It is important to note that Carthage, unlike Rome, had no confederation of allies, and that there was no standing army at the Punic city. As de Beer (1969) suggests, the hastily assembled force of Hasdrubal Gisgo and Syphax, although large in number, was probably "*only a rabble of miserable quality*" that would be "*quite unable to stand up to veteran Roman legionnaires*," and even more importantly, had no Hannibal to lead them.

Scipio discontinued the siege of Utica and prepared a defensive camp on the peninsula, in what later became known as the Castra Cornelia, going into winter quarters. Probably still hopeful of being able once again to charm Syphax with his silver tongue, he sent many envoys to the Numidian camp, as well as to the Carthaginian, to offer a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Believing the overture to be in good faith, Hasdrubal Gisgo and Syphax started negotiations with Scipio aimed at ending the conflict. It was obvious that the Carthaginians wanted the long war to end, and for peace to be achieved. The Roman commander, who had no desire for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, since it would have deprived him of glory and the spoils of victory, pretended to go along, and skillfully gave the impression that he was in agreement with the proposals of his reluctant opponents, and that peace would be reached as soon as he received confirmation and approval from Rome. The peace proposal he was offered was not frivolous; it was an agreement stipulating that the Carthaginian forces would withdraw from Italy and the Romans from Africa, and that for the territories between Africa and Italy the status quo would prevail (Livy 30:3-4).

Having deceived the Carthaginians with the false negotiations—Scipio had not asked for any verification from Rome, it was all a sham—he engaged next in one of the most treacherous attacks recorded in human history. Since his delegates had repeatedly visited the Punic camps and had secretly mapped them in close detail, once he had the Carthaginians convinced that an agreement and peace were imminent, he launched a sneak attack in the middle of the night. Massinissa and Laelius were in charge of setting fire to the Numidian quarters, while Scipio himself supervised the torching of the Carthaginian camp (Polybius 14:2; Livy 30:5-6). The temporary structures housing Hasdrubal's and Syphax's men went up in flames, and the soldiers, thinking the fire accidental, emerged without their weapons to put out the blaze, and were cut down without mercy. So much for good faith and "Roman fides." Through fire and sword, the unarmed and defenseless Numidians and Carthaginians were slaughtered by the thousands. No honor could be attached to such treachery, but Roman historiography tries to justify the actions of their hero by stating that he feared some Punic trick, and that he had indicated that the negotiations were off prior to the sneak attack, both highly unlikely. Hasdrubal Gisgo and Syphax were able to flee from the

macabre scene, the former returning to Carthage and the latter going to Abba (Livy 30:7).

The Carthaginian senators were horrified and demanded action. Hasdrubal was able to persuade Syphax to continue the struggle, and the forces of the Numidian king and the Carthaginians, mostly raw recruits rather than soldiers, congregated at the Great Plains to give battle. Livy characterizes the army of Hasdrubal Gisco at the Great Plains as an “*irregular army suddenly raised from a half-armed mob of rustics*” (30:28, 3). Not surprisingly, they were defeated by Scipio, with the help of the Numidian cavalry under Massinissa. Hasdrubal fled to Carthage and Syphax to his capital, Cirta, with Massinissa and Laelius in hot pursuit.

Syphax was defeated and captured. In the same day, Massinissa married Sophonisba, the wife of the captured monarch. The well-known anecdote that follows throws some light on the characters of both Massinissa and Scipio. The latter regarded all prisoners as Roman property, and was outraged at Massinissa, demanding that he surrender Sophonisba to be sent in chains to Rome. Massinissa failed to stand up to Scipio, although he had the leverage of being commander of the Numidian cavalry, without which Scipio’s previous victories in Africa might not have happened, and whose help would be essential to face Hannibal when, as was inevitable, he was recalled from Italy. Despite professing ardent love for the beautiful Carthaginian princess, he could think of nothing better to offer her than a cup of poison. Scipio had seduced him with a promise of recognition as Numidian king, and clearly greed trumped love. She accepted her wedding “gift,” and her suicide at least spared her the indignity and humiliation of being paraded through the streets of Rome, as Syphax himself later was, prior to his incarceration and death at Tibur in 201 (Livy 30:13-15).

Scipio offered Carthage peace conditions as follows: unconditional return of war prisoners and deserters, withdrawal of all forces from Italy, concession of Spain to Rome, withdrawal from all Mediterranean islands between Italy and Africa, surrender of all but 20 Carthaginian warships, payment of 5,000 silver talents, delivery of citizens to serve as hostages, and the supply of a huge amount of grain to feed the Roman army (Livy 30:16). Carthage accepted and sent delegates, both to Rome, to sign the agreement, and to Scipio, to achieve the cessation of hostilities.

The request for a truce was granted by the Roman commander, but in Rome the Carthaginian delegates were vilified and mistreated. According to Livy, “*Marcus Valerius Laevinus, who had twice been consul, contended that spies, not envoys, had come to them, and that they should be ordered to depart from Italy and guards sent with them all the way to their ships, and that a written order should be sent to Scipio not to relax effort in the war [...] a larger number [of senators] voted for Laevinus's motion. The envoys were sent away without securing peace and almost without an answer*” (30:23, 2-8).

Hannibal, who was still undefeated in Bruttium, at the southern tip of the Italian peninsula, as well as his youngest brother, Mago (who had suffered a reverse of fortune in his invasion of northern Italy, after an aborted attempt to

move south hoping to eventually join his brother), received orders to return to Carthage to defend the motherland, and both complied, although Mago died from his wounds on the way back (Livy 30:18-20). Hannibal, who had fought for 15 years in Italy, must have realized that the war no longer made sense and could not be won, and that all the Carthaginians could hope for at this point was a reasonable peace. He sailed to return to Africa, probably in the fall of 203.

During the armistice, 200 transports carrying supplies for the Roman forces in Africa, escorted by 30 warships, were severely damaged by a storm, within sight of Carthage, where the population was suffering starvation. While the warships managed to survive the tempest and reach the Promontory of Apollo, a number of the scattered and damaged Roman ships were towed to Carthage by Carthaginian vessels (Livy 30:10). Scipio reacted with outrage, claiming that the hope for peace and the sanctity of the truce had been violated. His delegates, sent to Carthage to protest, were threatened by a mob, but managed to escape unharmed. Scipio prepared to continue the armed conflict. The Roman historians, of course, neglect to mention that the Carthaginian envoys to Rome had also been mistreated, and that the Roman senate had failed to ratify the peace treaty (Livy 30:25, 10), so that the responsibility for the renewal of hostilities did not lie only with the Carthaginians—Rome had also acted in bad faith.

Meanwhile, Hannibal disembarked at Leptis (Livy 30:25, 10) late in 203 and moved to Hadrumetum (Livy 30:29). *“From there, after he had spent a few days that his soldiers might recuperate from sea-sickness, he was called away by alarming news brought by men who reported that all the country round Carthage was occupied by armed forces, and he hastened to Zama by forced marches”* (Livy 30:29, 1-3). Polybius, whom Livy probably follows in the above, writes: *“The Carthaginians, when they saw their towns being sacked, sent to Hannibal begging him not to delay, but to approach the enemy and decide matters in a battle. After listening to the messengers he bade them in reply pay attention to other matters and be at their ease about this; for he himself would judge when it was time. After a few days he shifted his camp from the neighborhood of [Hadrumetum] and advancing encamped near Zama. This is a town lying five day’s journey to the west of Carthage”* (15:5, 10).

The exact location of Zama remains the subject of research and speculation. It probably was not Zama Regia, about 90 miles west of Hadrumetum, as some have suggested, or Naragarra, favored by others. Even the classical record lacks unanimity. While Nepos gives Zama as the name of the place, Polybius refers to it as Margaron, Livy as Naragarra, and Appian as Killa. As we will see in the following article, this lack of specificity has important implications.

The military potential of Hannibal and Scipio at “Zama” was similar—each commanded about 40,000, but Scipio, with the arrival of Massinissa at the head of a contingent of 4,000 Numidian riders, was vastly superior in cavalry. When we add to this the fact that over two thirds of Hannibal’s forces were unseasoned, the illusion of apparent equality promptly dissolves. And yet, the Carthaginian side counted with the genius of Hannibal, which practically tipped the scales.

Before Zama, Hannibal and Scipio had never met directly, either in battle or in

a face to face encounter. Roman historiography has constructed an anecdote suggesting that Hannibal asked Scipio for a personal conference prior to the battle, and Polybius as well as Livy pretend to transcribe in detail what was said, although neither was there. The exchanges reported may be largely or totally imaginary—at least some parts are patently absurd, as we will see below.

According to the Polybian account, as the generals meet, Hannibal speaks first, offering terms of peace, and counseling Scipio not to give in to arrogance and thus reject an offer made in good faith. This is plausible, although the words put in Hannibal's mouth at the start of his alleged statement are unlikely: "*In the first place we went to war with each other for the possession of Sicily and next for that of Spain*" (Polybius 25:6, 6). He might have said instead something like this: "*We went to war initially when Rome intruded in the Carthaginian province of Sicily, and at the end of that conflict, when we were putting down a terrible rebellion of mercenaries, you, Romans, used the opportunity to steal Corsica and Sardinia from us; next we went to Spain, to be able to secure the means with which to pay the unreasonable tribute you demanded from us, but you imposed the Ebro as a limit beyond which we were not allowed to pass, and yet you made a treaty with Saguntum, a city south of the Ebro and thus within our agreed territory, a city which, with your encouragement, persecuted and massacred citizens loyal to Carthage, which forced me to lay siege to it and take it by force. Upon this, it was you, Romans, who used this as an excuse to declare war....*" The matter of the guilt for the start of the Second Punic War has been debated for many years (e.g., Rudat, 2006; Hockert, 2005; Reutter, 2003; Barcelo, 2000; Hoyos, 1998; Kolbe, 1934), but the preceding would, in all likelihood, have been the position embraced by the Carthaginians, and is supported by most of the scholars listed above.

Scipio's reply is not only arrogant, but absurd, and certainly would not have been left unanswered by Hannibal. According to Polybius, Scipio states that "*neither for the war about Sicily, nor for that about Spain, were the Romans responsible, but the Carthaginians were evidently the authors of both, as Hannibal himself was well aware [my italics—Hannibal would have had a hard time not laughing aloud at this bit of Roman propaganda, which obviously Scipio could not have believed himself]. The gods, too, had testified to this by bestowing victory not on the unjust aggressors but on those who had taken arms to defend themselves*" (15:8). A most unlikely statement, for surely Scipio would have realized that in that case the gods must have favored Hannibal, who until then had emerged victorious every single time, not to mention that the gods must have been asleep in 211 BCE, when both Scipio's father and his uncle were killed in battle in Spain (Livy 25: 34-35).

Next, Polybius reports that Scipio supposedly went on to claim that the Carthaginians had broken the previous peace agreement: "*We jointly sent envoys to Rome to submit [the terms] to the senate [...] The senate agreed and the people also gave their consent. The Carthaginians, after their request [for peace] had been granted, most treacherously violated the peace*" (15:8, 8-10), which, if we follow the later account by Livy, given above, was not the case at all. Scipio, allegedly, ends by

demanding unconditional surrender: “*Either put yourselves and your country at our mercy or fight and conquer us*” (15:8, 14).

These are the preliminaries to the battle of Zama in the classical record, a mélange of inconsistencies and contradictions. But what did really transpire in the battle that followed? As we will see in the next article, the descriptions of the engagement contain highly unlikely elements, and some recent evidence has even led to questioning whether the battle itself actually took place!

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The Trouble With Zama: Paradox, Smoke and Mirrors in an Ancient Battlefield

By Yozan Mosig

The second so-called Punic War between Carthage and Rome came to an end in 202 BCE. Rome had prevailed and a peace treaty was signed in 201 between the two Mediterranean powers, with heavy concessions and indemnity to be paid to the victor. The deciding factor, according to the classical record (composed almost exclusively of pro-Roman accounts, the Carthaginian reports having been conveniently lost or destroyed), was the Battle of Zama. Hannibal, probably the most brilliant military genius in history, after remaining unvanquished for 16 years on enemy land, facing overwhelming odds and receiving almost no reinforcements, was allegedly decisively defeated by the Roman general Publius Cornelius Scipio, who would be awarded the title Africanus in recognition of his great victory. Is this really what happened? A number of problems, inconsistencies, and paradoxes suggest otherwise.

At Zama, Hannibal supposedly was able to field 36,000 infantry, 4,000 horse, and 80 elephants, to face Scipio's army of 29,000 infantry and over 6,000 cavalry. A standard summary of the description of the battle, as presented by Roman historiography, can be found in the Oxford Classical Dictionary (2003): "*The elephants, opening the battle, were either ushered down corridors Scipio had left in his formation or driven out to the flanks, where they collided with Hannibal's cavalry, which was then routed by the Roman cavalry. When the infantry lines closed, the Roman first line may have defeated both Hannibal's first and second lines, though the remnants may have reformed on the wings of his third line, composed of his veterans from Italy. Scipio, too, reformed his lines at this point, and a titanic struggle developed until the Roman cavalry, returning from the pursuit, charged into Hannibal's rear, whereupon his army disintegrated*" (Polybius 15: 9-16; Livy 30: 29-35; Scullard, 1970; Lazenby, 1978).

First of all, let us consider the matter of the elephants. Roman historiography, as part of the development of the Scipio legend and the dissemination of pro-Roman propaganda, has recorded that Hannibal had available an inordinately large number of war elephants at Zama, no less than 80 (Livy 30:33). Considering that he had only 37 to cross the Alps and invade Italy, and that in the string of his great and devastating victories, from 218 to 216, the elephants participated in only one battle, at the Trebia, the number given for Zama is quite remarkable.

Following Scipio's invasion of the Carthaginian homeland in North Africa, two major military engagements between the warring powers took place before Zama, one at Utica and the other at the Great Plains. How many elephants did the city of Carthage, which did not support a regular standing army, maintain? If the Carthaginians had had a large supply of trained war elephants at hand, it would have made sense for them to send along a sizeable contingent of pachyderms, the tanks of antiquity, with Hasdrubal Gisgo, when he marched to meet Scipio's invading force surrounding Utica. But we do not read Roman reports of any

elephants, not a single solitary one, accompanying the forces of Hasdrubal.

Surely, after Scipio's treacherous sneak attack in the middle of the night, burning the tents of unsuspecting soldiers lulled into complacency with a promise of peace, the Carthaginian senate would have ordered all its available war elephants to march to face the ruthless enemy at the Great Plains. Once again, the elephants were conspicuous by their absence.

Then, all of a sudden, Hannibal, who had only been able to assemble a makeshift army for the decisive confrontation at Zama, appears with no less than 80 elephants, all with mahouts and trained for battle. This most unlikely brigade of pachyderms is in all likelihood nothing more than a fabrication of the pro-Roman historians, a bit of propaganda to make Scipio's victory appear more formidable and impressive. Perhaps instead of 80, there were 18, or maybe only eight, or, most probably, none.

The charge of the presumed elephants supposedly opens the battle, but we are told that they were frightened by the Romans responding with loud noises, shield clashing, trumpets, and what not. This also does not make much sense. Ancient battles typically started with loud yelling, shield banging, and other forms of intimidation, and consequently a major part of the training of animals to be used in attacking enemy positions would have consisted of accustoming them to such sounds.

Then, it is claimed that the elephants either run blindly into corridors left open in the Roman formation for the purpose of directing the animals to harmlessly pass through—Scipio's alleged “solution” to the problem posed by an elephant charge—or they panicked and turned against Hannibal's own men, wrecking havoc with his cavalry on the flanks. This also does not hold up against logical scrutiny. Since in addition to one or more armed warriors the animals carried mahouts on their backs, and the animals were trained to respond to the commands or prodding of their riders, they would surely have been angled to the right or left to trample men at the edges of any such corridors and cut through them obliquely. Furthermore, as Haywood (1933) and Scullard (1974) point out, it is not credible that rampaging elephants would do a lot of damage turning against their own side, because the mahouts carried a hammer and chisel to kill any elephant running out of control, as was the case at the earlier battle of the Metaurus (Livy 27:49). It can also not be argued that these were poorly trained elephants, for if Carthage did not send any elephants with Hasdrubal Gisco to Utica or to the Great Plains, it would have had available all its trained pachyderms. If all elephants had been insufficiently trained to be of any use to Hasdrubal Gisco, their status would not have changed by the time of Zama and they would not have been deployed. Finally, had the city exhausted its supply there would not have been enough time, between the Great Plains battle and Zama, to capture and train more. Of course, as Richard Gabriel has pointed out (personal communication), no serious military historian accepts the figure of 80 elephants at Zama. If there were any, they would have been few, and probably none.

Unfortunately the myth of the elephants at Zama has been perpetuated in many accounts found in the literature, and was even an important feature of the fascist film *Scipione l'africano*, directed by Carmine Gallone, produced and backed by Mussolini's government in 1937. In that barbaric motion picture 50 elephants were used, with a number of them being actually speared and butchered. Mussolini identified himself with Scipio, and his fascist regime with the Roman Empire (less so with the Roman republic, but politicians are often notoriously ignorant in historical matters).

Attempts have been made to compare the battle of Zama with Cannae, and to call Zama a "Cannae in reverse," but the comparisons simply do not hold up. First of all, the scale of Cannae was vastly larger. With 96,000 Romans and 50,000 Carthaginians, almost 150,000 men committed themselves to a death struggle on that fateful day, 14 years earlier. By contrast, if we accept the Roman accounts, likely to have exaggerated the number of Carthaginian combatants at Zama in order to make victory more impressive, we would have 35,000 on the Roman side and 40,000 (probably less) on the Carthaginian, or a total of 75,000—about half the number of combatants fielded at Cannae.

At Cannae discipline was absolute, and Hannibal's forces moved with clockwork precision, leaving nothing to chance. After the Carthaginian heavy horse under Hasdrubal defeated the Roman equites on the right wing of the Roman formation, they did not give in to the temptation of pursuing the survivors, a remarkable display of discipline. Instead they wheeled to the right like a well-oiled machine, swiftly riding behind the mile-long battlefield to fall upon the flank and rear of the large contingent of allied Italian cavalry under Varro, which was being kept in place by the hit and run tactics of the agile and versatile Numidian riders. When the allied cavalry panicked and broke, it was only the fast Numidian horsemen who undertook the pursuit, while Hasdrubal's heavy horse, again with perfect discipline, wheeled once more to the right and fell upon the rear of the Roman army already engaged with the Carthaginian center and in the process of being enveloped by Hannibal's elite Lybian forces closing in from the sides. Hasdrubal's preordained cavalry manoeuvre blocked the possibility of any retreat and doomed the legions under Servilius and Minucius to their fate.

Compare the above display of equestrian manoeuvrability and discipline with the cavalry engagement at Zama, where Hannibal was outnumbered by 6,000 to 4,000 in horsemen. It is clear that Hannibal instructed his smaller Numidian and Carthaginian cavalry to feign a retreat when the Roman horse attacked at the beginning of the battle, and, pretending to escape, draw away from the battlefield the pursuing Numidian horse from the right Roman flank, under the command of Massinissa, as well as the Roman equites under Laelius from the opposite wing. This they accomplished with perfection, removing the superior cavalry forces from the battlefield. Hannibal, and not Scipio, controlled this development.

With respect to the infantry engagement, only Hannibal's third line, which he

held as a reserve far behind the others, was composed of seasoned veterans and elite forces from his Italian campaign. Naturally, most of them were not among the men who had crossed the Alps with him in 218 BCE, but they were experienced soldiers, including many from Bruttium, who were determined to shake the Roman yoke. His first two lines, on the other hand, were of questionable quality, and Hannibal probably expected them to cave in under the onslaught of the veteran Roman legionnaires, although not without first taking their toll from them, both in terms of casualties and fatigue. He wanted to insure that not only the Roman first line—the hastati—but also the second and third lines—the principes and the triari—would come into the fray and gradually wear themselves out. Once Hannibal's first line broke, the retreating soldiers were not permitted to re-integrate themselves at random points in the next line, but were forced to move to the sides, extending the Carthaginian front. Knowing Hannibal's habit of meticulous planning, it is likely that this repositioning was intentional and decided well before the start of the battle. The same thing happened after the second line broke, and then the Romans were left facing the fresh and rested elite veterans of Hannibal's army, plus a vastly wider enemy line, threatening to engulf them from the flanks.

At that point in the fray, Scipio must have realized that his situation was becoming desperate, for he was in danger of being enveloped from the sides, and was facing an irresistible barrier of rested veterans ready to crush his tired soldiers in the center. We are told that he ordered the Roman advance stopped and repositioned the principes and the triari to the sides of his formation, extending his front to match the width of the Carthaginian line, hoping to avoid encirclement. From the Roman account we get the impression that the Carthaginians remained idle during this redeployment, patiently waiting without attacking until Scipio was done with his preparations, which is patently absurd. We are asked to believe that the most brilliant tactician in history not only was waging a most unimaginative battle but actually wasted time when he would have known full well that time was of the essence and that he had to complete the defeat of the enemy infantry before the absent Roman cavalry could return to the battlefield. It is likely that, if the battle was unfolding as described, at this point Hannibal's rested veterans would have attacked the Romans without giving them the opportunity to redeploy. At the very least Hannibal would have used the momentary lull in the fighting to reorganize his own forces, most likely by displacing his veterans to the sides, to face the triari and the principes, while the survivors of his first two lines got ready to deal with the exhausted hastati in the center—it is not credible that he would have remained idle. As for Scipio, there was nothing more he could have done at this point, and we are told that the battle resumed with increased ferocity. In view of the rested condition and the quality of Hannibal's elite veterans, it is very likely that they were in the process of routing the principes and triari while the center held, and certain defeat looked Scipio in the face.

What saved the day for Scipio, if we believe the classical accounts, was the

fortunate return in the nick of time of the horsemen under Massinissa and Laelius, who had been tricked away from the battlefield for what must have been hours, and who fell upon the Carthaginian rear. If this is what happened, we must conclude that ultimately it was Massinissa's betrayal of Hannibal and his fortunate (for the Romans) return to the field, rather than the generalship of Scipio, that decided the outcome of the battle. Had Massinissa and Laelius's return been delayed for another half hour, Hannibal would almost certainly have prevailed. Even at this point, the Carthaginians were not completely encircled, as the Romans had been at Cannae. According to Polybius, the Carthaginian casualties numbered 20,000, an outcome hardly comparable with the 70,000 fallen at Cannae. Scipio, undoubtedly aware of how close he had been to defeat, had he not been saved at the last moment by Massinissa, later acknowledged that Hannibal had done at Zama everything anyone could have done (Livy 30:35, 5-8). The illusion that at Zama the student had matched and outdone the teacher, part of the Scipio myth propagated by Roman historiography, does not fit what supposedly took place in the last battle of the Second Punic War.

The classical accounts of the battle of Zama, as we have seen, are strangely inconsistent and contradictory. The course of the struggle is unimaginative to the point of being suspect as the alleged outcome of a first-rate military mind such as Hannibal's and even Scipio's. It reads more like the invention of a writer lacking the vision of a great general. The matter of the fictional elephants further reduces credibility. But these are not the only problems with the battle of Zama.

The recent dating of the famed dual military and commercial Punic port of Carthage to the second, rather than the third, century BCE, has created a paradox leading to further doubts and possibilities. According to Dexter Hoyos in *The Carthaginians*, the suggested dating for the construction of Carthage's artificial ports south of the agora is c. 218-210, but H. R. Hurst, in his Excavations at Carthage points out that the latest scientific dating indicates that the port, one of the great architectural and engineering wonders of the ancient world, was actually built later, at some point between 201 and 146 BCE (the latter, of course, being the year of the destruction of Carthage by the Romans). As Abdelaziz Belkhodja argues quite compellingly in his new book, *Hannibal Barca: L'histoire véritable*, published by Apollonia in Tunisia in 2012, if the military port was actually built after, and not before, the conclusion of the second war between Carthage and Rome, this casts serious doubts on the authenticity of the peace treaty that Carthage was required to sign after the alleged defeat at Zama. The treaty, which dates back to 201 BCE, included the clause that Carthage's naval forces be dismantled, and in the future be limited to no more than 10 warships. The great Punic port, with berths for over 200 warships, could not have been built for a navy limited to 10 galleys. Consequently, that limitation did not exist when the port was constructed, which in turn means that at least that provision of the treaty is fictitious.

Belkhodja also points out that no one has been able to find the exact location of the battle of Zama (the village of Jama, close to Siliana, some 150 km southwest

of Tunis, and a number of other candidates have been suggested, but without archaeological verification). The site remains unknown, while those of practically all other major battles waged during the Second Punic War are reasonably well established. This is particularly troublesome in view of the Romans' penchant for erecting monuments *in situ* to commemorate their greatest victories. They held control of North Africa for centuries, so why is there not some impressive display of statuary marking the battlefield? There is none, not even a lonely column or the ruins of a temple—as would be expected if the battle had never taken place!

If the war was concluded with a peace agreement giving concessions to Rome (but not including the complete dissolution of the Punic navy), as offered by Hannibal in his meeting with Scipio, this would have negated the need for a final battle. The construction of the military port after the war would then make sense, as would the lack of a monument to mark the location of the fictitious battle. It is therefore possible that the battle of Zama never took place and was a fabrication of Roman propaganda, left uncontested following the Carthaginian holocaust of 146 BCE. As Belkhodja argues, although Carthage lost the war, Hannibal may never have actually been defeated by the Romans.

But why the deception, the smoke and mirrors creating the illusion of a decisive military engagement that may never have occurred? The answer can perhaps be found in the wounded pride and the hubris of the Roman psyche. For a people who regarded themselves as destined to rule and as better than all non-Romans, the humiliation of suffering defeat after defeat at the hands of a man of genius who remained unvanquished and untarnished for 16 long years, on their own land, where they enjoyed every possible advantage, was too much to bear. Cannae, in particular, left such a devastating hole in their arrogance that it could only be filled by creating the illusion of having achieved a comparable victory.

It is interesting to note that none of the classical accounts of the controversial final battle of the Second Punic War was written by an eye-witness. Both Polybius and Livy, and others who essentially parroted them later with small variations in details, wrote about Zama after the Carthaginian holocaust of 146 BCE (which Polybius witnessed in person, as companion and friend of Scipio Aemiliano, the butcher of Carthage). The myth of Zama seems to have emerged full-fledged after the burning and dispersal of the libraries of Carthage and the destruction of all Carthaginian records of the war. Consumed by hatred for what they could not overcome, and deeply resentful of the renewed prosperity of the North African city-state (largely the result of the reforms instituted by Hannibal as suffete after the war) the Romans eventually unleashed the genocidal fury that led to one of the greatest crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Roman war machine, the annihilation of the thriving and vibrant civilization of Carthage, 37 years after the death of its greatest defender.

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ILLUSTRATIONS & MAPS



South of Gades (current-day Cádiz) the island of Sancti Petri, site of the Temple of Herakles-Melqart from where Hannibal announced his epopee, following in the footsteps of Herakles.



Carthaginian Spain, Celtic peoples in grey and Iberian peoples in black. To the south, from Gades to Akra Leuke, Phoenician and Carthaginian towns. (Map background : Ancient World Mapping Center, supplemented by the reference to various texts and documents.)





Map of Sicily, main theater of operations of the Third Punic War.

Ancient World Mapping Center 2003

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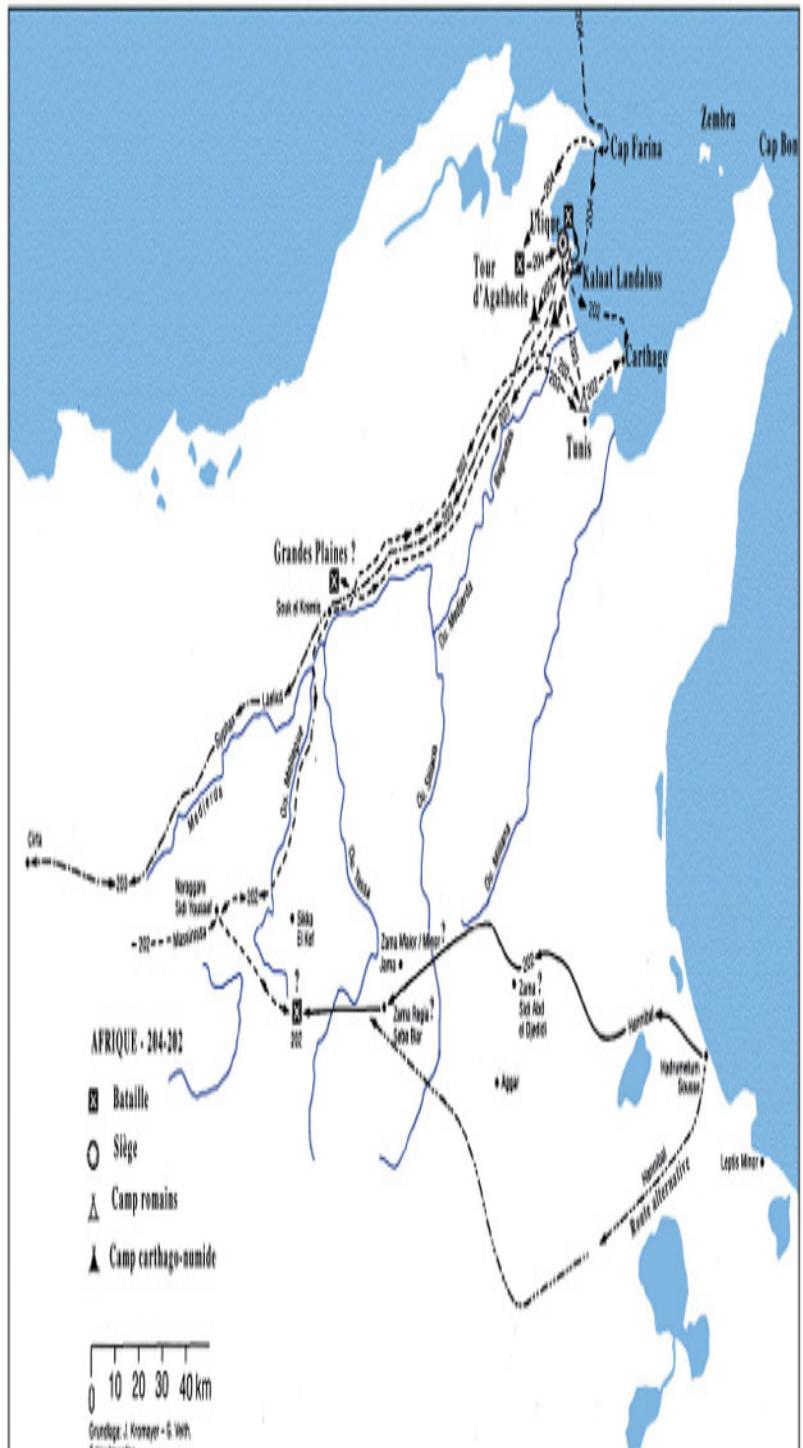
ITALY IN 217

The map shows the location of Brundisium Colony in Italy. It includes a compass rose indicating North, South, East, and West. A legend on the right side identifies symbols for battles, sieges, Carthaginian camps, Roman camps, and Roman garrisons.





Mago asking the Senate for reinforcements and offering the symbol of triumph : an urn filled with the golden rings of Roman aristocrats fallen at Cannae (19th century engraving)



Operations in Tunisia between 204 and 202. (© J. Cromayer & G. Veith)

FELSNAS.LARTH
SPHLC.RFL.XAI
MIVPCE.CIPVE
TLESEAHNITALVSCH

Inscription found on a tomb in
Capua : "Felsnas Larth, son of
Lethe, he lived 106 years, he
stayed in Capua, he combated with
Hannibal's people. A. J. Smart,
Etruscan Studies 35, 1967



Syphax's Banquet, fresco.

Villa Medici at Poggio a Caiano 1578-82, ALLORI, Alessandro (Florence, 1535-1607)

Allori's Banquet of Syphax is on display on the long wall of the "Salone" near Franciabigio's "Return of Cicero to Rome." Allori placed the event in a large hall with columns which opens onto a landscape.

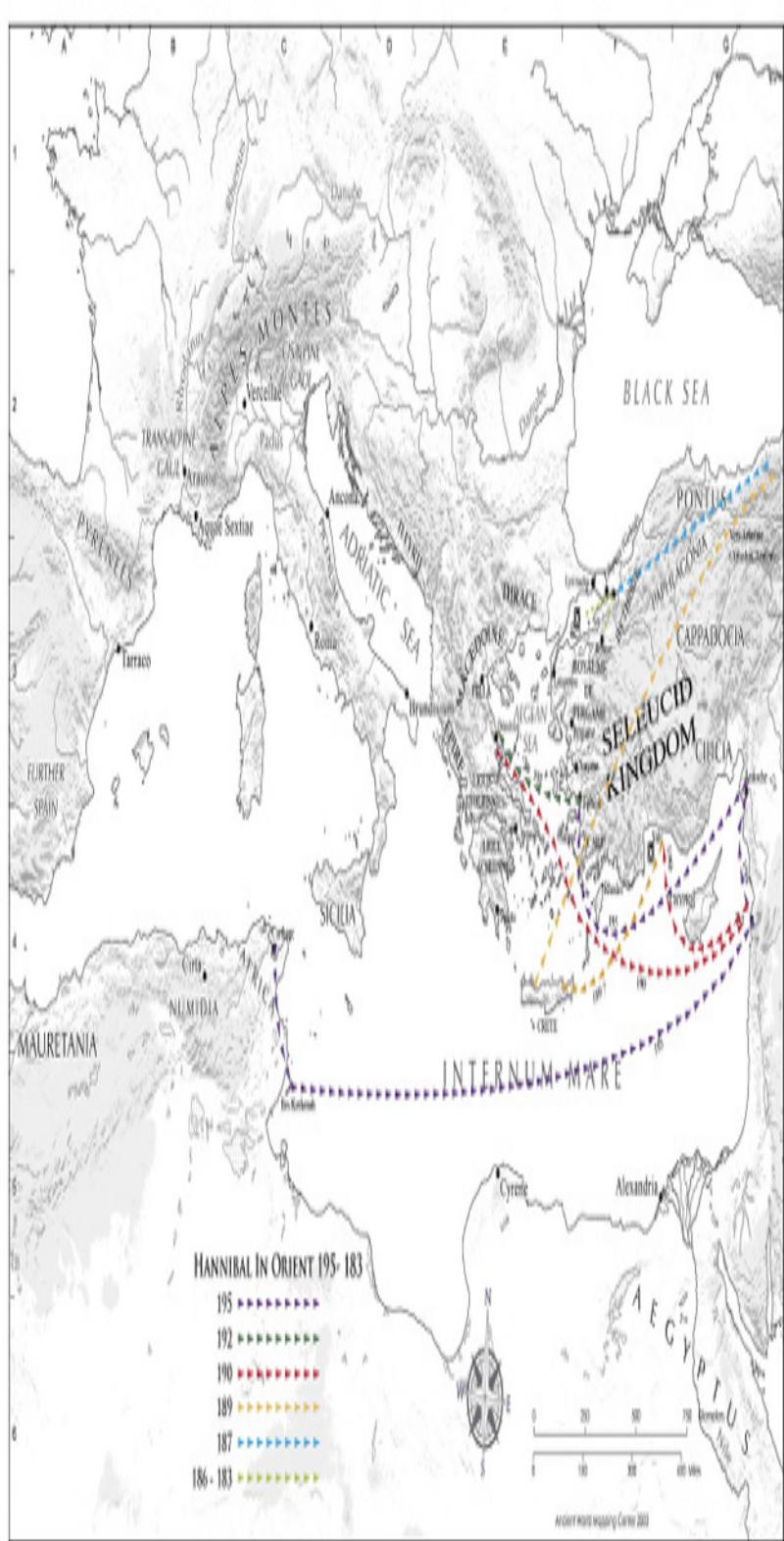
Syphax was the king of the Masaesily kingdom of western Numidia during the last quarter of the 3rd century BC.

In book XXVIII Livy reported a surprise encounter between Scipio and Hasdrubal Gisco (who had left Spain before the Romans) at the court of the Numidian King Syphax.

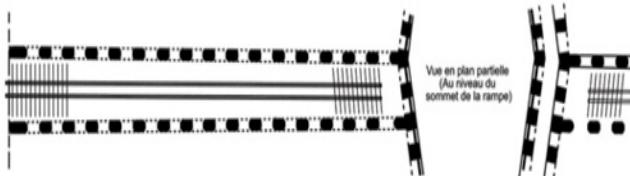
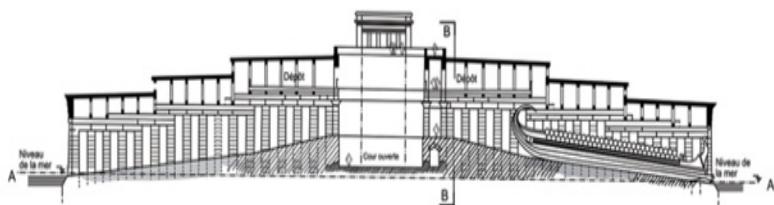
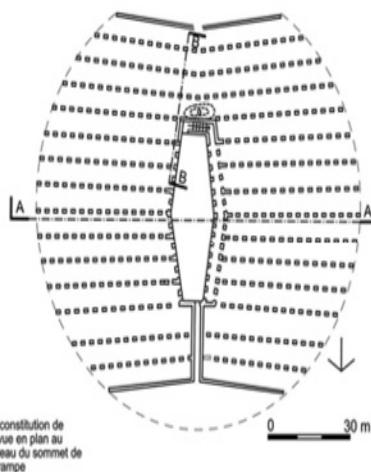
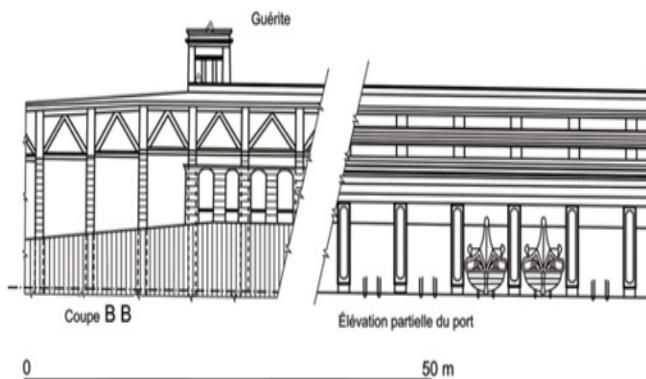
Their host was flattered that the two generals had asked for his support and insisted that his guests share a meal. The two enemies reclined on the same triclinium (eating couch) to enjoy the banquet.



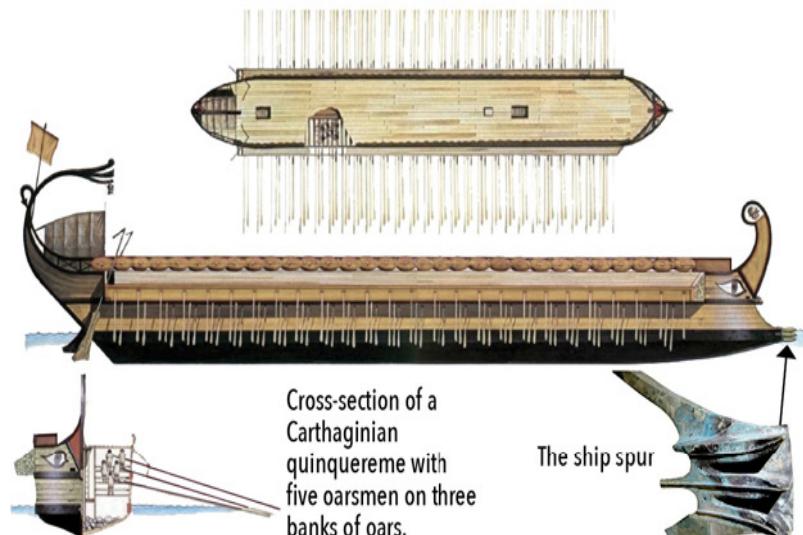
The military port of Carthage, built in the 2nd century BC (© CFX)



MAP OF THE ADMIRALTY ISLAND



DETAILS OF THE CARTHAGINIAN FLEET



Cross-section of a Carthaginian quinquereme with five oarsmen on three banks of oars.



The top of the line fleet in that epoch featured the «kings of seas» or quinqueremes, the «fives» which had replaced triremes, the «threes».

The quinquereme was a cataphract ship, that is to say with a closed hull to protect rowers and a full deck able to carry soldiers and war equipment. On top of that, it was equipped with swim racks and had uneven oar banks : three banks of oars, rowed by five oarsmen, two to an oar in each of the upper rows, and one to the lower oar (see diagram below).

The quinquereme was roughly six meters large. Its length was about forty meters and its deck allowed it to bear a mass of heavy infantry, which replaced ramming combats. Especially since the Romans adopted the «raven» (corvus) a movable boarding-bridge with a grappling hook that clung onto a Carthaginian ship, enabling soldiers to easily board it.

Words and alphabetic symbols intended for the assembly operation were inscribed on the inner side of each piece of the keel and hull of ships. Each

symbol or sign made it possible to indicate the position of each part. The various components of the ship were made by carpenters, then entrusted to shipbuilders who stored them in shipyards and therefore could work on their assembly throughout the year. Ships were thus constructed according to a standardized process, avoiding lengthy shaping of deck and hull planking in ship construction.

This archaeological discovery seems to confirm ancient writings by Antiquity historians on the remarkable speed of construction of Punic ships. Appian reported that during the Third Punic War circa 147 BC, in spite of the Roman siege on Carthage, Carthaginians built dozens of ships : triremes and quinqueremes. Since the discovery and study of the Marsala Punic ship, we no longer have reason to doubt this statement. This system of construction fosters a better understanding of Polybius' narrative which evoked the capture of a Punic ship by the Romans and using it as a model to build their own fleet.



Hannibal Barca, Carthaginian coin from Spain, 3rd century BC



Hasdrubal Barca, Carthaginian coin from Spain, 3rd century BC



Hamilcar Barca, Carthaginian coin from Spain, 3rd century BC



Massinissa



Mago Barca, Carthaginian coin from Spain, 3rd century BC



Hasdrubal the Fair, Carthaginian coin from Spain, 3rd century BC



Scipio Africanus



Claudius Marcellus



Fabius Maximus



Prusias I



Antiochos III



Philippe V of Macedonia



Syphax



Eumenes II of Pergamon



Titus Quintius Flamininus



"Hannibal's mausoleum at Gebze"

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